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The street that called my name!.....p.13

The Wrestler: crushed for our iniquities...p.15

63rd year of publication

Moccasins in the closet

Michelle Nieviadomy

EDMONTON, Alta. – For the first part of my life, my journey took me as far from being "Cree" as I could possibly steer myself.

Nothing fosters an identity crisis like being uncomfortable in one's own skin. I grew up as a Cree *iskwesis* (girl) in a predominantly white town, in the heart of bitterly cold Saskatchewan. I was different, and I knew it. And while my parents tried to embrace who I was, I tried to run far, far away from everything *Indian* in me.

I began to be able to look at my people and not feel ashamed.

It's not that I wasn't exposed to my Cree heritage. We would spend parts of summers at our cabin on White Bear Reserve, where I was steeped in reserve living. I vaguely remember the pow wows and sweatlodge ceremonies. Yet, though people all around me embraced these things, my ears and spirit were closed.

To me, being Cree meant being "drunken" and "poor". Why would I want to be associated with these things? I continued on my journey, Cree-less.

A bend in the road

Many moons passed by, until my journey found me at Providence College and Seminary in Manitoba. One of my professors, teaching us Canadian Aboriginal Issues, surprised and challenged me by veering repeatedly towards the topic of *reserves*, and the fairness of Aboriginal peoples having their own land. Something in this conversation stirred in me a feeling of injustice that I cannot explain. I had spent my maturing years stowing away anything remotely Indian, tucked out of sight. Now, a new compassion was burning in me. Somehow, during my time in that class, I began to be able to look at my people and not feel ashamed.

Fast forward a few years. I continued on with my education at King's University College in Edmonton. It was here that my "moccasins" and the other trappings of my heritage would truly, proudly emerge. I learned about the history of my people, and I *understood*. My time at King's changed the way I thought about Aboriginal people – but more importantly, it changed my self-perception. I knew now that I wanted to work with and "save" my people. (Oh yes, the Lord still had some tweaking and plucking to do within me!)

Michelle Nieviadomy at the Edmonton Native Healing Centre's "Culture Camp."

For the last paper in my last class at King's, I chose to write on a hidden gem called the Edmonton Native Healing Centre. I never knew of this ministry until one of my professors pointed me in its direction. Little did I know what the Creator had in store for this *iskwesis*!

Now six years into my career at the Healing Centre, I have come to peace with who I am as a Cree woman. I find myself walking with other folks on their own healing journeys. I am blessed to be able to laugh, to cry, to struggle, to pray, to smudge, to dance, to sing, to serve, to love and to walk with *my people*.

I have realized it is not about "saving" the Indian, but about restoring and reconciling our walk and our journey with the One who created us, and to live just as he created us . . . and for me, that means living as a Cree.

Michelle Nieviadomy is a member of Committee for Contact with the Government (CCG), and works as a youth program coordinator at the Edmonton Native Healing Centre. She holds a B.A. in Social Sciences.

Blue chip Bible:

Minister and accountant Robert W. Katz on the Bible's relevance to our economy

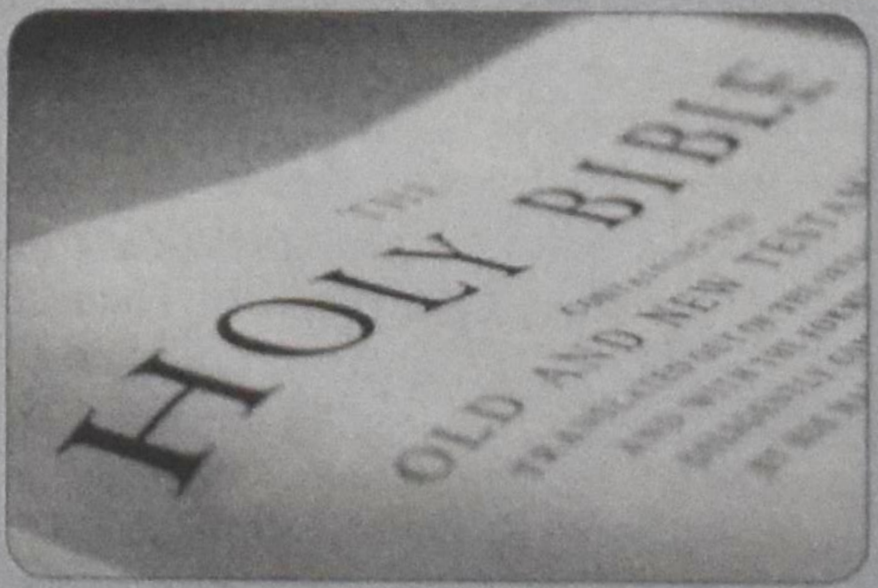
Angela Reitsma Bick *(CC)*: Many newspapers and magazines are capitalizing on issues of fear regarding money and the economic situation right now. Do you see Christians responding any differently?

Robert W. Katz: No, they are just as fearful and just as unprepared, unfortunately. The Bible is a wonderful textbook for personal finance, but people have largely ignored using it that way. They are just as fearful and just as unprepared and in just as much trouble.

CC: Do you think it's true that personal finances are more difficult for people to talk about than their spiritual health, physical health or relationships?

Katz: People tend to be confidential about it. It's not that they're reluctant to talk about money, but

See **Bible** *on p. 2*



Godly stewardship

The purpose of mastering . . . godly stewardship becomes clearly focused when we begin to see it not as a means of chasing temporary gains, but as God's plan for us to build upon an eternal foundation. We are [illegible] to become a light to a lost and dying world, and all the while we are storing our true treasures in heaven. It just doesn't get any better than that.

– Excerpted from *Biblical Roads to Financial Freedom* by Robert W. Katz.

News

An essential service?

How the transit strike crippled Ottawa

Harold Alkema

After 51 days, the transit strike in Ottawa is finally over. Even in retrospect, however, it is difficult to see what motivated the job action (inaction?) by Amalgamated Transit Union Local 279 in the first place. Ostensibly, the city insisted that it retain control over scheduling and that wage increases for drivers would not impact the overall budget for public transport. The union maintained that it should set schedules for its drivers and that they should enjoy more substantial raises than those offered.

In the meantime, riders were caught in the middle, wondering why the union was demanding such steep salary increases during a deep recession and why the municipal government was doing so little (it seemed) to resolve minor issues and get the buses running. The strike began in early December and was only settled at the end of January.

Parliament could only act once it had dealt with its own problems, namely passing the budget and bridging some of the political divides that have kept the whole country's political future in doubt.

The Ottawa bus strike might point to the need for a "new deal" between cities and the Feds, but what shape this might take is hard to determine.

Many in Ottawa have also asked about the possibility of redefining what is meant by "essential service." Local 279 was able to walk off the job because the service it provides is not deemed essential – that is, the removal of this service does not endanger health or safety. Issues of life and limb aside, many within Ottawa have pointed out that the city needs public transit.

Ottawa covers a huge geographic area. It is really four cities in one (Ottawa, Nepean, Orleans, and Kanata). Residents living in the east and west ends have trouble getting to jobs in the city's core under the best of circumstances. During the strike, the situation was markedly worse. Some faced the prospect of losing jobs. In addition, traffic in the downtown core is restricted by a complex system of one way streets, speed bumps that frighten even the most intrepid speeders and (oh, the irony) dedicated bus lanes.

Ottawa citizens were relieved when, after 51 days, bus service resumed.

Still, it remains true that this incident has brought the city's transit plan into question and shown just how necessary buses are within Ottawa's traffic mix. Even with the labour issues resolved, it will take until April to get all the bus lines running and the system functioning at full capacity. Apparently, the transit system can be shut down at a moment's notice but only brought back up over a period of many months.

At the height of the bus strike, in late December, an interfaith group gathered together and prayed for an end to the dispute. They called on government and the union to recognize that a protracted job action only hurt those who were already most vulnerable in society – the marginally employed, poor and elderly, to name a few. It is a testament to these individuals that they remembered the call to do justice for those who could not stand up for themselves when government and labour forgot, or at least ignored, their responsibility.

Harold Alkema is a researcher living and working in Ottawa. During the strike, he had many perfectly good pairs of pants sullied by winter salt on numerous ambulatory trips between Centretown and the Byward Market where his office is located.

Bible *. . . continued from page 1*

they are reluctant to master it. The Bible tells us to know the conditions of our herds and flocks. You need to be aware of what God has entrusted to your care; you need to manage your personal finances – and it's not a suggestion; it's actually a command. And yet it's easy to graduate from college and not know how to balance a bank statement. Then you're thrown into a world where you need to make 1000 financial decisions, and unfortunately there are a lot of unscrupulous and semi-scrupulous people out there.

CC: Is the ability to manage money even more important right now, because of the economic situation?

Katz: I see current events in light of some real Bible basics. In Scripture, we're told not to get in debt. And yet debt is crushing our country, and our country is a reflection of the people swimming in debt. And for Christians, there was a fair warning. There are stories in the Bible, there are examples; there are commands about not being in debt. There are stories about having an emergency fund for exactly situations like this. So unfortunately, people didn't heed the basics, which was to get out of debt, have an emergency fund, and then start saving and investing for future needs. The Bible is an incredibly practical book. I've never been asked a financial question that I couldn't find the answer in Scripture.

CC: I'm reminded of Joseph, in Egypt, planning ahead for the famine –

Katz: I gave a sermon on that very thing. You know, you can't get through the book of Genesis without two great examples of planning ahead. One being Noah, and the other being Joseph. That was today's modern day emergency fund.

There are a lot of proverbs about the ant being diligent, and people who are not diligent are called sluggards. The Bible has 7500 verses on money and personal finance, and two thirds of the parables deal with that issue. The answer is in Scripture, and if you just do what God says, you'll be blessed.

CC: Do you see the economic aid packages (to the automotive industry and other industries) as the answer to recovery from the recession?

Katz: I'm speaking for the United States, I'm not sure about Canada, I think what's going to happen is Scripture all over again. They're going to pump literally trillions of dollars into our economy, and they've lowered interest rates down to almost nothing and we have relatively low inflation, but it's still all borrowed money. We are now up to $10 or $11 trillion of debt as a country, the largest debt of any nation in the world, and at some point we have to pay it back. Unless they are remarkable at what they are doing right now [in Washington], [a bail-out] is generally highly inflationary and it causes interest rates to rise dramatically and it causes market prices to rise. So while we may have a couple of good years coming up, eventually someone's going to come knocking on our door, both as individuals and as a country, saying "Okay, time to payback."

CC: Let me shift gears into more of a global perspective. There's a new curriculum for church groups called *Lazarus at the Gate*, referring to the parable of the rich man who repeatedly ignores a beggar called Lazarus. One participant said, after going through this study, that when we all have this much information about the world, then Lazarus is at our gate and we can't pretend we don't see him. Do you agree with that?

Katz: I don't want to come across as critical of *Lazarus at the Gate* (because I believe it is so important to help the poor), but frankly Lazarus has been at the gate of every generation. That's why we find the story in the Bible over 2000 years ago. Mass communication hasn't changed this; if anything it may desensitize people. God puts the poor at everyone's gate as a test to see if we will, "feed the hungry, clothe the naked and give the thirsty something to drink". A heart that follows Christ will try and see the need and minister to it, a hard heart will see it and ignore it.

The purpose-driven tithe

Rick Warren, founding pastor of Saddleback Church, has garnered media attention by "reverse tithing" the tens of millions of dollars he's earned from his book, *The Purpose-Driven Life*. He says that when he got married, he and his wife "began tithing 10 per cent. Each year we would raise our tithe 1 per cent to stretch our faith: 11 per cent the first year, 12 per cent the second year, 13 per cent the third year. Every time I give, it breaks the grip of materialism in my life. And so now, we give away 90 per cent and we live on 10 per cent." Warren cites King Solomon in Psalm 72 as his inspiration.

CC: Is there a danger that people will decrease their charitable donations during an economic slowdown?

Katz: We are seeing that already. I live in a fairly affluent area of the city, I go to a very large church, and I'm an elder at the church so I can see the offering. With our demographic, if we are getting that drop, then I can only imagine what is happening with other, less wealthy parts of the city..

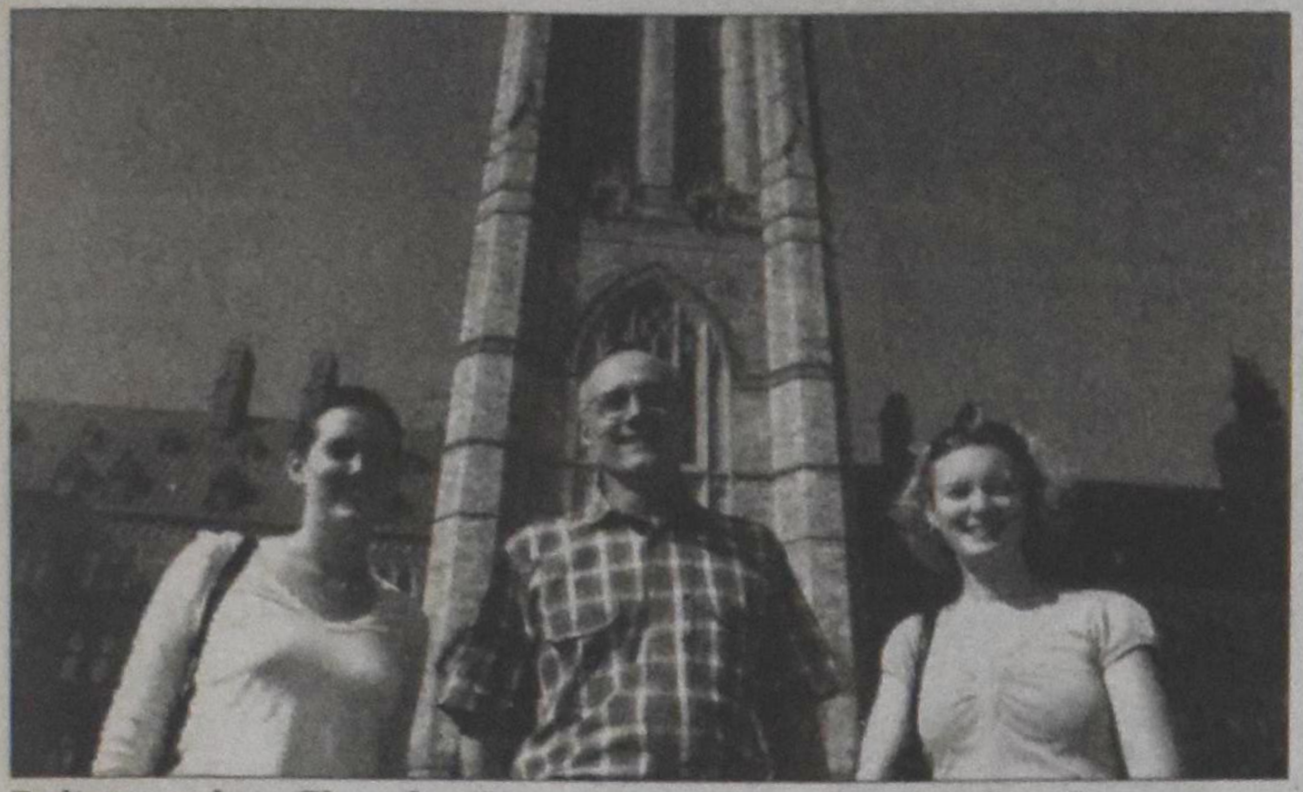
The Bible says we are obliged to be faithful with our tithes and offerings. The tithe is the 10 per cent that goes to the local church. But the book of Malachi says tithes **and** offerings. And the offerings are exactly what you're talking about – for the Lazaruses of this world. When people start giving sacrificially of their tithes and offerings, I have seen so many miracles and so many lives change that I'm absolutely sure this is still a tenant that is meant to be followed today.

CC: What advice would you give to churches during turbulent economic times?

Katz: The church is real good about teaching people what to do with their 10 per cent. But it's terrible about teaching people what to do with the other per cent. More often than not, pastors are scared to death to teach tithing. They don't want to lose people. The irony is that I believe this actually robs people of a blessing. I would strongly urge pastors to preach tithes and offerings.

Bob Katz has worked as a CPA and registered investment advisor for over 20 years, and is the author, most recently, of The Solomon Portfolio. *He is a frequent guest on Christian television shows and often speaks at churches. CC spoke to him at his office in New Orleans.*

Politics/Chapters



Policy analyst Chandra Pasma, executive director Joe Gunn and policy intern Mariel Angus on Parliament Hill.

Checking in with CPJ in Ottawa

Karen Diepeveen

Chandra Pasma sits at her desk, glancing out the window looking over downtown Ottawa. "It's so important to be close to Parliament Hill," she says, "if you're going to develop relationships with the staff and decision makers of the federal government."

Pasma is a policy analyst with Citizens for Public Justice (CPJ), a national organization with roots in the Christian Reformed Church. CPJ promotes public justice in Canada by encouraging citizens, leaders in society and governments to support policies and practices that reflect God's call for love, justice and stewardship.

In July 2007, CPJ moved to Ottawa after spending 45 years with its main office in downtown Toronto. Kathy Vandergrift, current board chair, says, "The time was right to make the move. CPJ members, board and staff knew that it would be easier to achieve our objectives if CPJ was located in Ottawa."

Pasma agrees. "Being in Ottawa makes a big difference for our work. We do a great deal of research on policies that affect all Canadians, and being able to meet with Members of Parliament (MPs) to discuss our work and to encourage them to adopt just policies is irreplaceable."

CPJ's proximity to Parliament Hill has also created opportunities to participate and make presentations at parliamentary committees. Pasma, for example, was asked to participate in a roundtable on guaranteed livable incomes for the Senate Sub-Committee on Cities. As she points out, CPJ's presence has led to chance encounters. "We've run into MPs from across the country at various functions, and have set up spontaneous meetings. We've developed closer relationships with MPs and have had more immediate involvement in discussing current issues."

For CPJ, however, being in Ottawa is not just about being closer to MPs. Many like-minded national organizations are based in the downtown core, and CPJ has strengthened relationships with these organizations, relationships that began in Toronto, but have now developed more fully and deeply.

Karri Munn-Venn, CPJ's socio-economic policy analyst, comments, "We've been able to strengthen our voice by joining with other national, Ottawa-based justice organizations. The strong partnership we've developed with Canada Without Poverty (formally NAPO), for example, highlights the benefit of being located in the nation's capital."

Staying directly connected to these groups has also meant CPJ can support their events. For instance, CPJ has participated and organized several poverty awareness events with partner organizations, including Make Poverty History rallies.

The staff team, based in Ottawa, has also grown. Joe Gunn, who came on as executive director in August 2008, notes that the staff are eager to make a strong impact in Ottawa. "There is a lot of energy here. Our members have expressed their support for our Ottawa presence, and this has encouraged staff to speak out for just policy change."

Another bonus of being in Ottawa has meant CPJ has created strong ties with the Laurentian Leadership Centre (LLC), an Ottawa-based internship program for Trinity Western University students.

CPJ has been blessed with several hardworking and

See **Checking in with CPJ** *on page 8*

Eternal Student

Peter Schuurman

Goodbye: The autumn within us

"Saying 'Hello' and saying 'Good-bye' are the two major learning tasks all humans need to accomplish," said pastor Roy Oswald. I would nuance that statement and suggest that while you always want to get started "on the right foot" saying "Good-bye" is usually more complicated than saying "Hello."

Goodbyes mix inside of us in a stranger way than hellos. Hellos are more naive, with fewer layers and stages and contrasting feelings. This is why there are more songs about good-byes; why the poets turn to endings more than to beginnings. Good-bye songs come easily to mind:

"Fare Thee Well My Dear"
"God Be With You Til We Meet Again"
"I'm Leaving On A Jet Plane"
"Bye-bye Love"
"So Long, Farewell, I Hate to Say Goodbye"

A request for "hello" songs would only draw a blank.

The fast farewell

I'm no expert on good-byes. I've had to say my share – to girl friends, schools, towns and jobs. As I write I am in the process of letting go my bi-national responsibilities with Home Missions in order to stick to local work – teaching part-time and to a greater extent, parenting my two children when my wife is at work.

I love moving on to new projects. I get a rush of fresh energy that dangling loose-ends and old cob-webbed work could never offer. I'm not alone in this. Pastor Oswald says that we North Americans fail to give proper closure to the significant chapters of their lives. He tells the story from his childhood of running through a weed-ridden field to short cut his route home from school. He didn't want to take the time to amble along the proper roads. We are the same: we would rather run through the thistles of farewell than deliberately bring closure to the various relationships that have been our dear community for a season.

Thus the title of his book: *Running Through the Thistles* (1998). We hate saying good-bye. The thorns and burrs we collect as we hustle through farewells stick to us, and we carry them into the next season of our lives. And they can hurt – both us and others. This is our dilemma: our culture prizes novelty, mobility and individuality; but our souls are shaped by memory, stability, and community.

The stakes are high according to Oswald. We risk not dealing with some powerful emotions when we deny ourselves proper closure, and the loose ends become baggage in the next chapter of our life. What is especially serious is that we all have our own style of saying good-bye, and some of our patterns are very unhealthy. Worse yet is the fact that farewell habits become the style in which we die. Death is the last good-bye, and without the grace that comes with healing, we will die as poorly as we say good-bye.

The eternal hello

Better than *saying* good-byes is to *pray* our good-byes, says spiritual director Joyce Rupp in her book *Praying Our Goodbyes* (1988). Goodbyes are the ache of autumn within us, she suggests. Something vibrant "leaves" the plot line of our life. There is an empty space inside us, a loss, a hole. We can best address such loss in the context of faith – a faith that works through grief and patiently allows time to heal. Healthy goodbyes are those that are named, reflected on with a grateful heart, and ritualized with letters, parties, and creative symbols of ending.

Faith also enables us to move beyond our loss and see our farewells in the context of a life to come. Rupp offers this perspective: we have been loaned to each other by God for a short time. Yet our "farewells and goodbyes are not forever when one lives with faith in the eternal hello."

"Good-bye" is a conjunction of "God be with ye." "Adieu" in French and "Adios" in Spanish both literally mean "To God." This ancient language recognizes that we do not part leaving each other to an abyss of unknowing. When we depart from friends, we commend each other to a welcoming God who remembers us for each other.

We are a summer people; yet to everything there is a season. There is a fragility and fleetingness to creaturely life we must accept. Still, like the fading loveliness of a flower, the chapters of our lives can be beautiful in their time (Eccl. 3:11). This is true not only when we leave but also while we are still mostly appreciated. That may be a good strategy. But rather because of this truth: autumn can be a colourfully rich time of year, even if things are falling, falling apart, and even dying.

Peter Schuurman (eternalstudent@sympatico.ca) is ending his position as the Christian Reformed Education Mission Leader in order to teach part-time and be a stay-at-home parent. He lives in Guelph, Ontario.

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Editorials

Drive-by mission projects

Angela Reitsma Bick

We are increasingly efficient these days: pop in a load of laundry while you start supper, drop off a DVD since you're doing errands anyway. We like to multi-task, and we often seek the fastest way to complete a job. But somewhere between high-speed at home and the fast-track at work, we've tried to make even evangelism more efficient by shrinking mission trips down to "short-term."

By short-term missions, I mean fewer than twenty people traveling to another country for under two weeks. These trips do have benefits: they combine our words and deeds, lend valuable insight into our own culture and offer a glimpse into the mission field. Most CRC churches promote short-term mission trips, and in high school I went on one or two myself. Nonetheless, I believe that the mindset behind this form of outreach does more harm than good.

Heavy footprints

My first objection is the emphasis put on travel, on the desire to cross the globe to find a place to serve the Lord. A grade ten class, presented with the opportunity to serve nearby or far away, will choose the latter every time. Their activities – often things like raking leaves, painting living rooms, or sorting cans at a food bank – could have happened without driving 1,200 km first. People living next door to our churches haven't heard the word of God from our lips. There are people in our cities who live under a dark cloud of despair. An exotic locale will provide more photo ops and scrapbook material, it's true, but repeat absences may blind us to needs closer to home.

Travel is always enriching, but I worry about the effects of participating in "drive-by" mission projects. Quite often, these projects are too focused on accomplishment: when we arrived, there was this hole in the ground; now, there's a cinderblock school. Perhaps our hands and good Western intentions could take a back seat for a while to our ears – to a respectful, listening attitude. Travel to Bolivia and visit, by all means, for your own education – but don't call it a mission project.

Abridged evangelism

The length of Spring Break mission trips also makes it hard for this type of outreach to be meaningful to those we're trying to reach. What kind of impact can 12 people have in six days? What do the people living there think of this group that breezes in and out, usually without knowing the native language or much about the new culture? It is possible that such a trip may plant a seed in a participant, one that may grow later into a desire to effect real change, but – for the most part – a quick trip will be quickly forgotten. Furthermore, the logistics of hosting an overseas group can easily disrupt the local mission by distracting the permanent missionary.

Finally, we should take note of the cost of short-term mission projects. Those plane tickets, passport fees, and other personal expenses could probably stretch much further if the money was given directly to the community in question, for local labour, perhaps, or for supplies. The longer-term needs in developing countries must be met in a more sustainable way than brief projects.

Indigenous alternatives

I wonder if there might be better alternatives to devoting ourselves to short-term mission projects. It may be less glamorous to volunteer locally, but it's cheaper, simpler, and just as eye-opening. There's plenty of need in North America to keep every church member busy, and addressing this need can be as rewarding as doing the Holy Spirit's work overseas or across the country. Many respected organizations also offer the opportunity to sponsor a child, a family, or a community. If we are intentional about writing letters and learning about one foreign country in detail, this can be a very enriching experience. Some churches also make a point of returning annually to the site of brief mission trips, which is another good way to develop relationships.

In a recent *World* magazine, Joel Belz recommends giving one per cent of your income (on top of tithing) to a worthwhile charity each year, rather than making small, random donations to a variety of places. In the same way, a family or retired couple could invest their time, for example, by spending a year together in a foreign country, doing their normal jobs and doing their best to learn from the new culture. This experience would avoid the casual feeling of some short-term mission projects.

Volunteer locally, travel with your ears open and, meanwhile, read. Many excellent books have been written, both fiction and non-fiction, which detail firsthand what it's like to live in Rwanda during the genocide, as a woman under the Taliban in Afghanistan, as a child soldier in Kenya, as a revolutionary in the Dominican Republic. It's a wonder and a blessing that so many informative stories from around the globe are available in English. You may just learn more from one of these than you would from spending six days in a concrete bunker in that same town, and God may use a book as much as a mission trip to plant the seed of love in our hearts for these far off people.

If you would like to comment on this topic, dash off a quick response between dinner and dishes to angela@christiancourier.ca.

Local missions outreach by Unity CRC Youth in Prinsburg, MN.

1) Worshipping at two Christian churches with very different styles of worship.
2) Passing out flyers and helping to run an outreach carnival.
3) Leading worship one evening at the James House – a Christian based local drug/alcohol recovery program – as well as reworking their landscaping.
4) Purchasing and putting together gift baskets and building a new portable sign stand for the local Hope Pregnancy center.
5) Teaching English to East African immigrants one evening.
6) Regularly delivering "Meals on Wheels."
7) Assembling items and loading them onto a transport container for orphanages in Moldova.
8) Helping to run the GEMS program for an evening.

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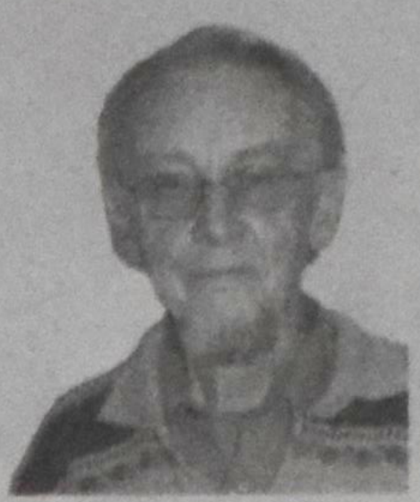
Engage the enemy, but do it fairly



Bert Witvoet

A friend of ours phoned me the other day and, in passing, complimented my wife on her letter to the editor of the *National Post*. I said, "What letter?" "You didn't read her letter?" he asked. "No, I didn't have time to read yesterday's paper," I lamely replied. He made some comment about the left hand not knowing what the right hand was doing. What does that have to do with us? I wondered. My wife and I always communicate very effectively. Sometimes she emails me as I sit upstairs behind my computer and she is spread out behind her laptop in the dining room downstairs.

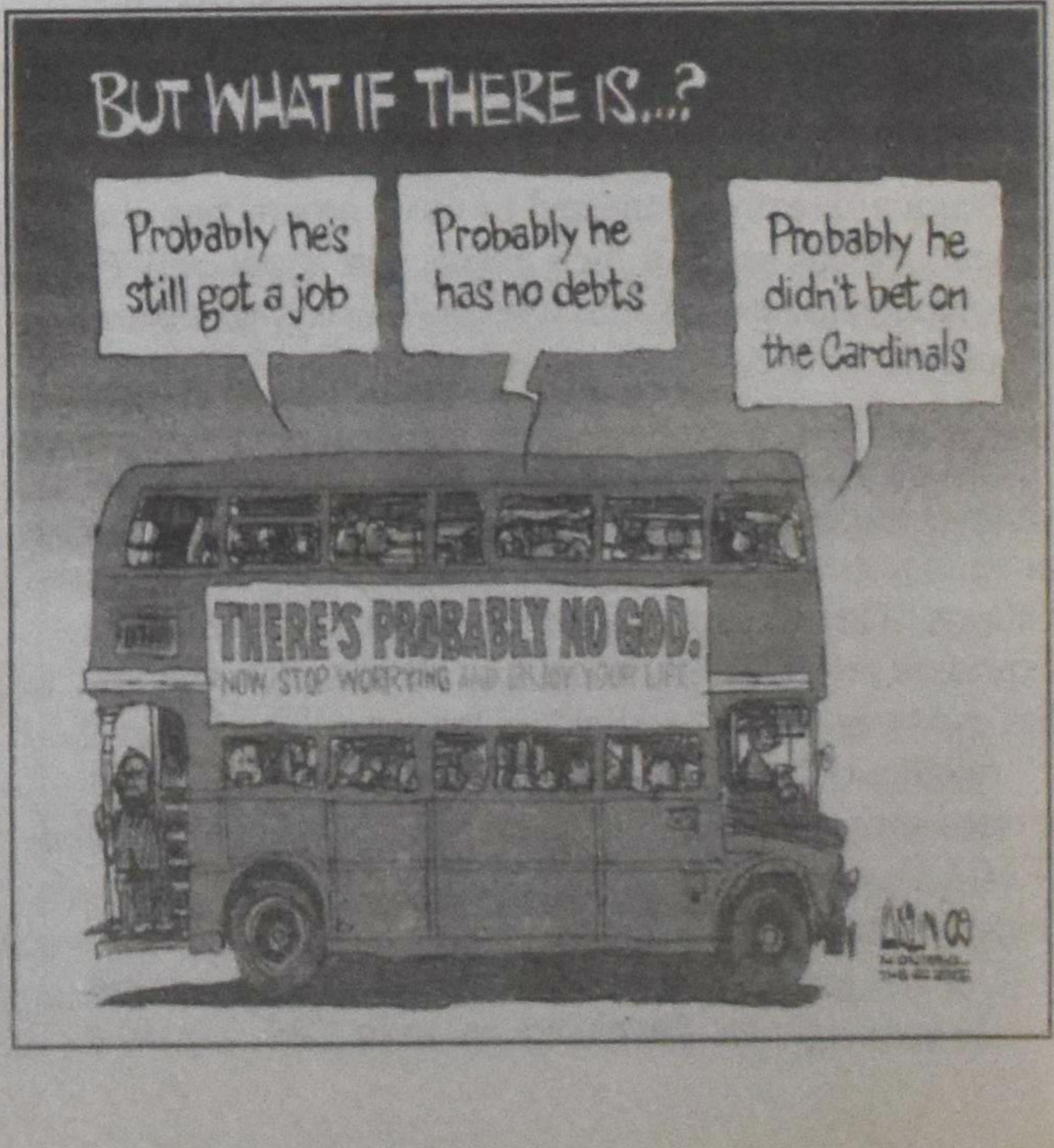
"Did your letter to the editor get published?" I asked my wife a little later. She smiled. "I wondered when you would notice it." Her letter was a good one. She commented on the outrageous award of $12,000 to a prisoner who had been stabbed in the buttocks with a plastic knife by a fellow inmate. Apparently the judge agreed that the prisoner was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and blamed the prison officials for not providing enough protection. Here is my wife's letter:

"It is hard to believe that a stabbing with a plastic 'weapon' results in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), and that this convict deserves a $12,000 'award' for being a 'victim.' Soldiers returning from Afghanistan may suffer from PTSD. This judgment makes a mockery of their sacrifices."

Unreasonable atheism

A week later something in the paper struck *my* sense of injustice. An atheist by the name of Stephen Marche commented on the ad campaign in Britain that declares "There's probably no God, so stop worrying and enjoy your life." Marche wasn't in favour of the bus campaign and making such a big deal of atheism. He found "this new militant brand of atheism off-putting." So far so good. But then he went on to take several potshots at Christianity that sounded unfair to me. So I wrote a letter to the editor that respectfully pointed out that Stephen Marche had painted "a superficial caricature of his 'enemy' by implicitly accusing believers of 'wilful ignorance," priests of inevitably resorting to 'abuses of power' and religion of 'inherent toxicity.'"

The letter appeared in the *National Post* 10 days after my wife's letter. I didn't say anything to my wife, wondering if she would notice it. She didn't say anything. Yet I knew that very little escapes her when she reads the paper,



especially the letter section. The next morning I asked whether she deliberately didn't say anything. She laughed. "No, I did see it last night, but you were busy on the phone and I forgot about it afterwards." See? We communicate very well.

Let your light shine

The whole episode made me realize that letters to the editor can be a very effective way of allowing a Christian message to enter public discourse. In fact, my letter was surrounded by several very fine testimonies of faith by others. Let me quote two:

"As a Christian, I welcome the atheist slogans on buses in London, England. If we are serious about seeking the truth, we should not fear or avoid discussion. And if Stephen Marche, an admitted atheist, can prove there is no God he should share this with others and save us all from the "willful ignorance" he so readily disdains. But could it be that his belief is far shallower than he is willing to admit?"

Matthew Jackson, Hamilton, Ont.

Here's the second letter:

"So the atheists in Britain are going high profile with bus ads in their campaign against God. As a Christian, I say, 'bring it on!' An all-out battle of ideas is much preferable to the hit-and-run style of this bunch. Atheists and secular humanists have had great success in recent years with their low-profile attacks based mainly on half-truths and often-accepted myths. If these statements are dissected and examined more closely, they fail. So let the games begin."

Dan Mailer, London, Ont.

What these letters have in common is that they are well-reasoned, bold, light-hearted and gracious. I much prefer such letters to angry letters from fellow Christians. It's important to let our light shine in the public square. But we must do it in a respectful way. By all means, challenge the opponent, but do it fairly. Let it be a fencing kind of duel, rather than a wrestling match, or a hit-and-run drive-by shooting. I love the statement "Let the games begin." That's my kind of polemics.

From the Lab

Rudy Eikelboom

Dear Taxpayers,

Thank you for paying for my rats. Last year I spent over $10,000 to purchase rats for my research. Science research costs money, lots of money. You, as Canadian taxpayers, provide most of the funds for this research through your federal and provincial taxes. THANK YOU from the whole research community! Let me tell you how your money is spent.

In Canada, both federal and provincial governments support research (part of our confusing division of responsibilities). I currently receive a Discovery grant from the federal government's Natural Science and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) to pursue one line of research. These funds are used to buy rats, drugs, needles, equipment, and other resources needed to carry out my research. The grant is also used to pay for help in carrying out experiments, providing part-time jobs for senior undergraduate and graduate students. It pays, too, for me and these students to attend meetings where research findings are communicated. I also receive an Ontario Mental Health Foundation grant to cover similar costs for a different line of research. This grant is large enough to permit me to hire a full-time technician. Research funds such as these are provided for a fixed number of years, from two to five years depending on the agency.

Differences in funding

The university (Wilfrid Laurier, in my case) provides the resources necessary for me to carry out my research, such as my salary and research space. In my case this means a laboratory and an animal facility staffed by two people responsible for day-to-day animal care. These costs are included in the university's operating budget, part of which is funded by the government. I should note that this is not true for Christian universities in Canada. While faculty at King's and Redeemer are eligible to apply for federal and provincial research grants, these monies are allocated with the assumption that the researcher's institution provides the background resources to make the research possible. Because Canadian Christian universities do not receive governmental funds for these overhead costs of research, these funds must be raised from within their supporting communities. Unfortunately, it can be challenging to find donors to supply these funds; funds for teaching are easier to explain and justify. (In the States, overhead costs are included in research-grant funding, so Calvin receives more government research support than do our Canadian Christian universities.)

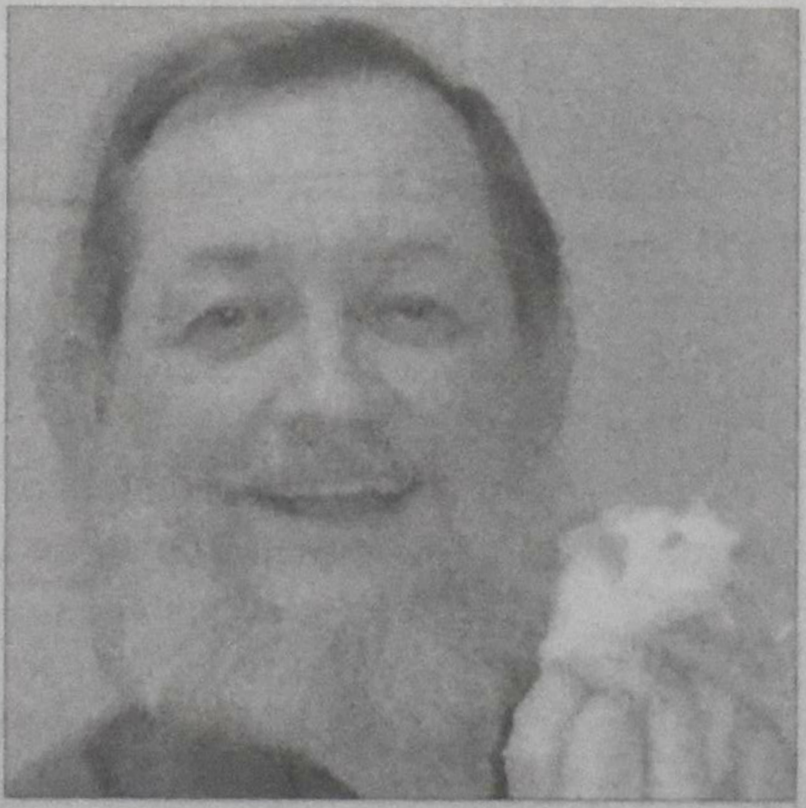
When researchers are in the last year of grant support, they have to submit a grant application. I spent a large part of this past fall preparing my NSERC application for its November 1 deadline. This document includes a listing of my past research accomplishments (such as published articles), what I hope to do in my next research cycle, and a budget. Just as an example, a rat costs about $24 and I requested 1500 rats for the next five years. This documentation has to be completed using the agency forms within very tight page limits (NSERC, for example, strictly enforces a five-page maximum for the proposal). When completed, the application is signed by a university administrator and sent to Ottawa.

Committee reviews

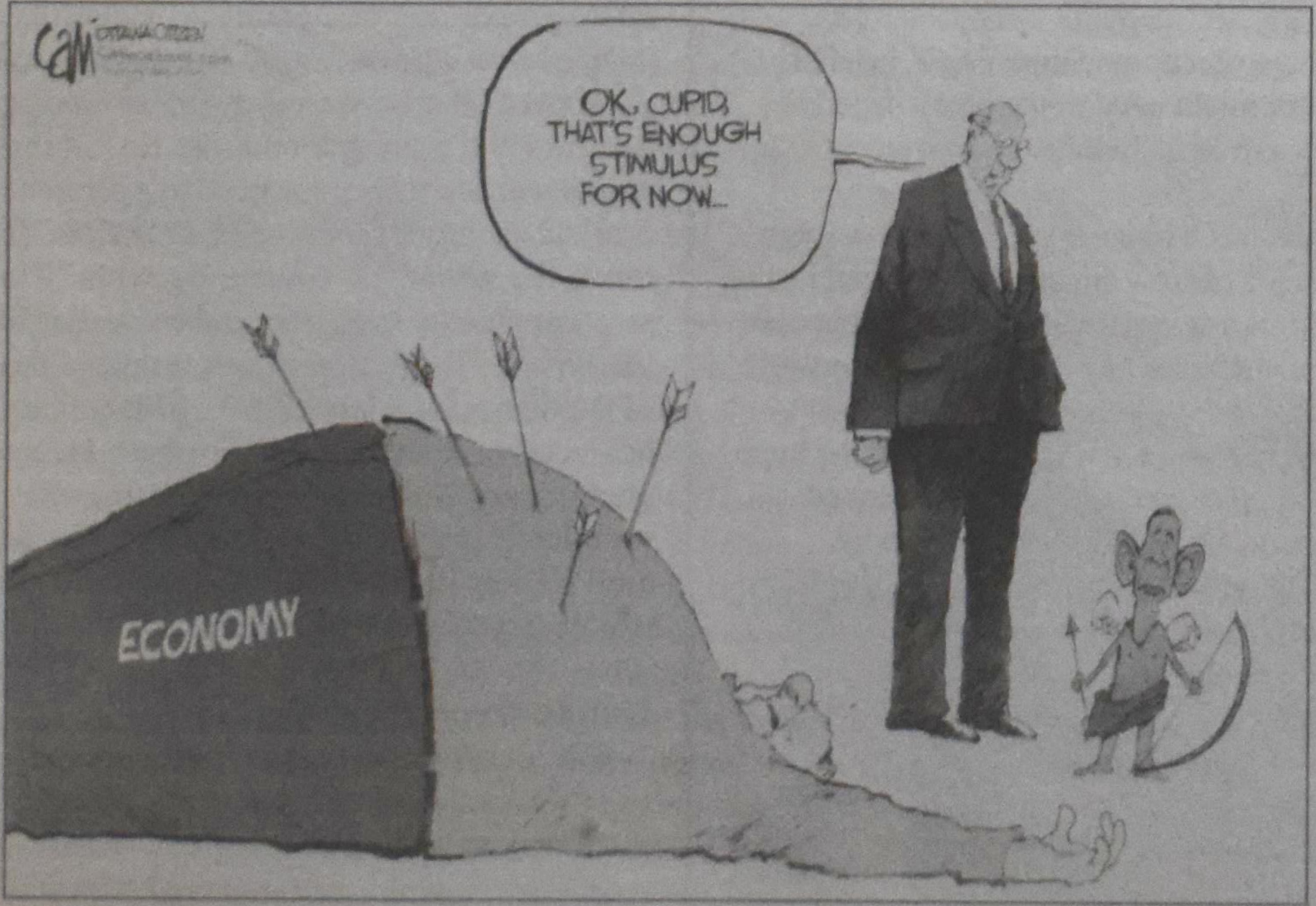
In Ottawa the applications go to discipline-specific committees. These committees, consisting of 10 to 15 experienced researchers, meet to evaluate the applications. Even with tight page limits, the committee members receive boxes of applications. The applications are also sent to external peer reviewers who have specific expertise. (In December I myself usually receive one or two applications to review.) By the end of January these external reviewers are asked to send their evaluations back to the committees at NSERC.

In February these committees meet for a week or so to discuss and decide the fate of each grant application. Unfortunately, everyone tries to write a really good grant application. Two decisions must be made: is this research that should be funded, and, if so, how much money should the researcher receive? With an increasing number of applications and always limited funds, this requires difficult choices, but my personal experience is that the committees do an exceptional job. Their decisions are made public in March. Successful applicants receive their funds – and thus can start their research – as early as April. Unsuccessful applicants receive feedback from the committee so that they can strengthen their applications next year.

Since sending in my NSERC application this fall, I am waiting to see if I will receive funding to continue my research over the next few years. Regardless of whether my application is successful or not, thank you for the rats.



Rudy Eikelboom (reikelboom@wlu.ca) is associate professor of psychology at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario.



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News

Ayaan Hirsi Ali urges vigilance against moral relativism

Victoria Dykstra

In her recent address, "Refusing to be Silenced," given to the Calvin College student body in its January Series, Ali urged the free western world to be on the alert against "moral relativism," a state of mind which rationalizes the danger of Islam by asserting the democratic right of every individual and group to exist and express its views. Ali claims this relativism will lead to the destruction of freedom in the western world as we know it. She claims the reason is this: that Islamic leaders, mullahs and imams are driving toward global Islamic Utopia under Sharia law and will use western cultural relativism and tolerance to achieve it.

Author and activist Ayaan Hirsi Ali, a Suni Muslim by birth, rejected Islam as a young woman to begin the journey toward spiritual, social and political freedom. Born in Somalia on November 13, 1969, Ali escaped her planned marriage to a distant cousin in Canada, a man she loathed, by visiting relatives in Germany and then seeking political asylum in the Netherlands. In this liberal environment, Ali received an education at Leiden University and became an advocate for Muslim women living in the Netherlands but caught in the oppression of their traditions.

Later she was elected to the Dutch Parliament and strove to expose the plight of Muslim women oppressed by the power of Sharia law, which Ali characterizes as fascism. Ali asserts that just as Nazism began with Hitler's vision, so Islam began with an Islamic vision, a caliphate which is a society headed by a caliph (leader) and ruled by Sharia law. In her view, violence is inherent in all of Islam, and the notion that Islam has a moderate majority is a fallacy. Islam, she claims, is a destructive, nihilistic cult of death which legitimizes murder. Currently Ali is a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank, and her "green card" allows unimpeded entry and opportunity to work in the USA.

Western naivite

Ali's claim that Muslim fundamentalism and moral relativism are a threat to western democracy lies in the western response to Muslim fundamentalism. In the west, Muslim fundamentalism continues unopposed, although it peddles thinking which undermines the fabric of democracy. Ali supports this claim by citing the history of the efforts of Dutch politician Geert Wilders. Wilders publicly opposed radical Islam theology and published his views in a peaceful and orderly way, ultimately creating a political party, claiming nine seats in Parliament, and creating a film exposing the violence of Islam. Although Wilders used only fair and democratic means to publish his views, he was physically threatened by the Muslim community and required 24-hour police protection to be safe.

Ali concedes that people in a democracy can threaten and be threatened; however, what is unconscionable, she says, is that Dutch parliamentarians moved to silence Wilders so that his Islamic opposition would be appeased. She notes that western leaders hold the faulty notion that Islam is a peace-loving body. In the West, therefore, if Islam equals peace and democracy equals peace, the two systems are reconcilable. Herein, however, lies the fallacy which poses a threat: Islam is not peaceful, but its being considered so allows it to go under the radar to promote its tenets.

Ali strongly urges western leaders to assiduously protect their democratic freedom of speaking and thinking with impunity. People need not agree, she claims, but differences in a democracy are settled in the ballot box, not by violence. In Europe the efforts to promote a civil society are already seriously undermined. European countries no longer require immigrants to pledge allegiance to their government. Immigrants are welcomed after answering a very simplistic question and paying a nominal fee. Immigrants who are told of the need to assimilate into the society of their chosen destination mock the notion by countering with, "Do you want me to drink beer and eat sausages like you?" The notion of becoming a part of the democratic fabric of the host country has been ridiculed and diminished. Hence ghettoes of immigrants perpetuating their traditional law and lifestyle undermine the civil society in which they've taken refuge and democracy is threatened.

Define freedoms

The question to be answered by every person who cherishes freedom of expression is "What can be done to reverse this crisis of

Continued on page 7

Flowers & Thistles
Curt Gesch

Encountering winter's grace

As I write this, Montreal is writhing in winter's grip. St. John's has horizontal rain, cold, and wind. The prairie's have had one chinook but are back to seasonable frigidity. Vancouver has finished cleaning up after its sequential snow disasters and is thinking about floods. And Inuvik basks in -28 C.

I'd say that more than one Canadian dreams about spring. People react in different ways to distant hopes. Some abuse groundhogs by forcing them from a comfortable sleep. Some forget their home and native land and head for hurricane country. Perhaps the wisest of us are ice-fishing on Lake Simcoe, turning disappointment with weather into fresh fish fillets and community spirit.

More than a couple of us remember the phrase, "Ah, spring, when a young man's fancy turns towards thoughts of . . . ." *Seed catalogs* are just the right tonic for many of us. Their arrival gives us hope of warmth and at least one piece of mail that we really desired to see. Others dust off tackle boxes, sharpen their hooks, tie a few elk-hair caddis flies, and lust after all the new equipment at the latest sports show.

Betsey Gesch reads outside in the snow, while Chester, the wonder dog, watches a moose near the barn. Chester has given permission to use his image, as has the fishing rod.

Far better than anticipating spring, however, is living it. And so we turn our attention to books. Books that allow us to vicariously experience delight and success, frustration and failure. I'm always on the lookout for interesting books on gardening and fishing. This winter I found two I had overlooked before.

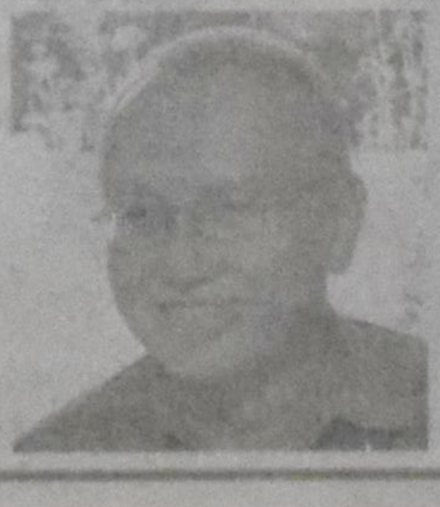
The first is also the only – so far as I know – feminist book on fishing. Why not? A recent female *Jeopardy!* contestant noted that her hobby was playing rugby. Besides, the first generally-accepted fishing book was written by a woman: Dame Juliana Berners, a nun who wrote her *The Treatise of Fishing with an Angle*, about 1486.

Lorian Hemingway writes about her folly in trying to keep the hard-drinking, hard living "Papa Hemingway" myth alive during the course of a marlin expedition. Joan Salvato Wulff (who, with husband Joe Wulff, were perhaps the most famous fly-fishing couple of all time) writes of steelheading on the Copper River near Terrace, B.C. Margaret Atwood contributes a poem related to fishing. (I wonder if she fishes now that she writes about economics. I hope so.) And there is even a piece for the bass-fishing tournament crowd: a writer name Sugar Ferris, head of Bass'n Gal (I think the editor might have wished for a different organizational name) gives us a large-mouthed-bass view of fish, temptation, and capture.

My favourite contribution is not about sport fishing, however, but about the irresistible magic of working on a commercial fishing boat off B.C.'s west coast. It is a story of loss, of love, and honest labour. "The rougher it gets, the more I love it. . . [i]t's the only time I feel alive."

Fishing may well be one of those activities that, when the hype and competitiveness, and braggadocio, and beer are removed, is one of the things that can help one feel alive. Read the book.

Uncommon Waters: Women Write about Fishing, Holly Morris, ed. Seattle: Seal Press, 1991. ISBN 1-878-067-10-9



Curt Gesh (curtgesch@hotmail.com) teaches at Houston Christian School and lives in the small village of Quick, 29 kilometres south-east of Smithers, B.C.

News

Barack Obama, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and the future of the West

John Bolt

Even those who did not vote for him had to be thrilled and deeply moved by the inauguration of the 44th President of the United States of America, Barack H. Obama. It was a signal moment in American national history – a hopeful indication that the promise of its founding vision that all men are created equal was within reach.

This promise, so often and for so long fallen short, was now hardly yet achieved, but at least it seemed more than just wishful thinking. A majority of Americans had elected a man whose race reminded us of the deepest and darkest shadows of the American psyche, the degradation of African people's slavery and chains, fetters broken in the emancipation of a bloody civil war but not fully removed in more than a century of continuing bigotry and discrimination. For once the nation as a whole had followed Martin Luther King's hope that people be judged on the content of their character rather than by the color of their skin. This was a moment to stand in awe; to give thanks to God for a national good; for a witness to the world.

Reaffirmation of past

The new President in his inaugural address indicated that he understood this, speaking eloquently about America's promise. At times sounding remarkably like Ronald Reagan, he offered hope for the nation provided "we the people . . . remain . . . faithful to the ideals of our forebears, and true to our founding documents." "The time has come," he said, "to reaffirm our enduring spirit; to choose our better history; to carry forward that precious gift, that noble idea, passed on from generation to generation: the God-given promise that all are equal, all are free and all deserve a chance to pursue their full measure of happiness."

He praised and set before as example "the risk-takers, the doers, the makers of things – some celebrated but more often men and women obscure in their labor, who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom." He gave thanks for "the blood of generations" that made today's promise possible; for those who "fought and died, in places like Concord and Gettysburg; Normandy and Khe Sanh." He insisted that America's ideals "still light the world, and we will not give them up for expediency's sake" and issued this olive branch to other nations: "And so to all the other peoples and governments who are watching today, from the grandest capitals to the small village where my father was born: know that America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity."

He also gave this warning to tyrants: "We will not apologize for our way of life, nor will we waver in its defense, and for those who seek to advance their aims by inducing terror and slaughtering innocents, we say to you now that our spirit is stronger and cannot be broken; you cannot outlast us, and we will defeat you."

Less than honourable

Sadly, Obama also made a number of missteps. Though he thanked President Bush "for his service to our nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition," he also indulged in some self-congratulatory moments of moral one-upmanship such as offering to the Muslim world "a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect," and pledging a new non-partisanship by "setting aside childish things" and the "tired dogmas of the past." The putdowns were gratuitous, lacked class and demeaned the man, the occasion and the office.

Still, nothing can take away from Mr. Obama's visionary portrait of the American ideal, and more conservative Americans should be willing to quote to him the President's own words when it is appropriate. (The degree to which President Obama's first week reflected his own inaugural is a topic for another time and another writer.)

Double standards

Later that same week many of us at the Calvin College Fine Arts Center heard another speech similarly extolling the western values of freedom and dignity of individual persons. In a stirring message, Somalian refugee and former Dutch Parliamentarian Ayaan Hirsi Ali called on the leaders of the Western nations to stop being apologetic about the West's obvious superiority to cultures and societies such as Islam that treat women as second-class citizens and respond to dissent with violence and death. It was time, she said, to boldly champion Western values as she lamented the current plight of another Dutch parliamentarian, Geert Wilders, now on trial for defaming Islam.

She noted the bizarre double standard that permits Muslims to engage in hateful acts while at the same time forbidding non-Muslims to be critical of Islamic hatred. It is too easy to be a European, she said; it costs nothing and demands nothing. She pointed to the ease of becoming a Dutch citizen – easier than getting a driver's licence – as a sign of European loss of faith in the ideals of the West. If we do not care about our own civilization, if we become cultural relativists who are unwilling to defend our free, democratic way of life, we will lose it. Miss Ali knows whereof she speaks; having fled the repression of an Islamic society and finding freedom in the Netherlands, she laments the treatment of those who dare to speak out against Islamic barbarism and for the free and equal rights of women in particular.

Courageous witness

Ali has left the Islamic religion in which she was raised and is now, she says, an atheist. Notwithstanding the fact that she is an African woman with first-hand experience of oppression, her politically incorrect message receives much the same response from westerners that Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's did. For the same reason we ought to pay serious attention to her. She is one of the truly courageous people of our day, one who has to live with the consequences of her courage.

She wrote the screenplay for her friend Theo Van Gogh's short film, *Submission I*, for which he was murdered by a Muslim fanatic who objected to his criticism. Sadly, Ali herself now requires 24-hour high-level security protection, a reality very evident at her Calvin lecture. I am profoundly grateful for Ali's witness. I pray that she may find the peace on earth that makes the 24/7 security unnecessary and the faith that enables her to live reliant only on her heavenly Father's providential care like the rest of us do.

Two speeches; similar visions; a double call to appreciation, gratitude and vigilance.

John Bolt (bltj@calvinseminary.edu) is professor of systematic theology at Calvin Theological Seminary

Ayaan Hirsi Ali urges vigilance against moral relativism ... *continued from p. 6*

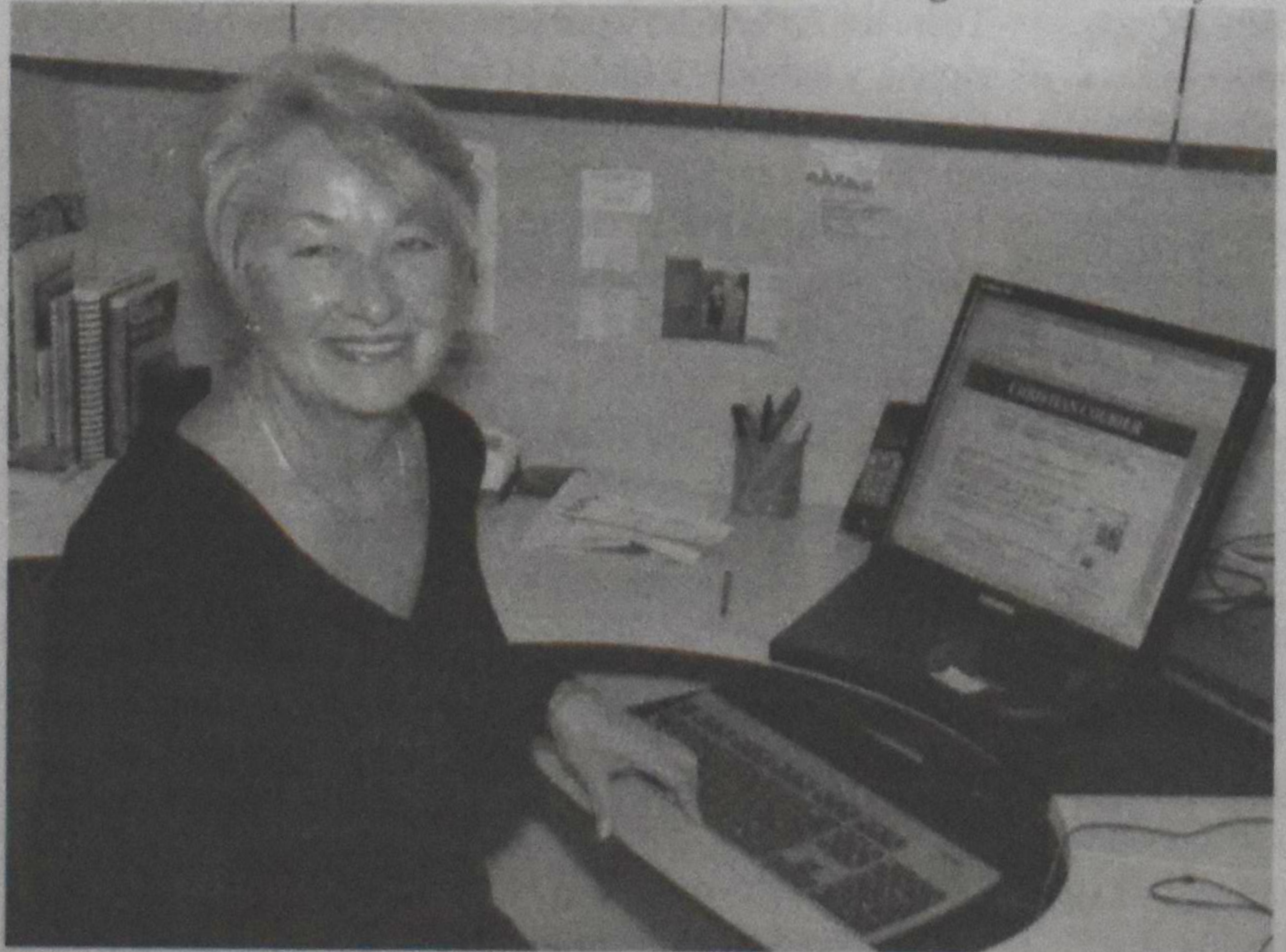
democracy in the western world?" Ali suggests that politicians stop tip-toeing around the issues. First, clearly define what is meant by rule of law, freedom of expression, and freedom of the press, and then implement these principles. Second, protect the vulnerable in your society who are being abused by power of undemocratic rules not arising out

Immigrants now ridicule the notion of becoming like the citizens of their host country.

of your own culture. The examples she gives are girls who undergo genital cutting in our society and women who wear head coverings because men, allegedly, cannot control their sexual urges.

To drive home the need to uphold, by force if necessary, the principles of the rule of law in which we believe, Ali cites John Stuart Mill: "War is an ugly thing, but not the ugliest of things. The decayed and degraded state of moral and patriotic feeling which thinks that nothing is worth war is much worse. The person who has nothing for which he is willing to fight, nothing which is more important than his own personal safety, is a miserable creature and has no chance of being free unless made and kept so by the exertions of better men than himself." Ali lives her principles by speaking out against the danger of an Islamic society and urges her readers and listeners to do likewise.

Vicky is a mother of five adult children, a wife, a grandmother, and a recently retired teacher who lives in Ancaster, Ontario and is seen here looking at the web site of CC.



Books by Ayaan Hirsi Ali

- *De Maagdenkooi*, translated as *The Caged Virgin: An Emancipation Proclamation for Women and Islam.* This book is a collection of essays and lectures from 2003–2004, combined with her personal experiences as a translator and advoocate for Muslim women in the Netherlands. It focuses on the position of women in Islam.
- *Mijn Vrijheid*, translated as *Infidel*, is an autobiography published in Dutch in September 2006 by publisher Augustus, Amsterdam and Antwerp, outlining her personal emancipation journey from childhood in Somalia, through her years as refugee in Kenya and Saudi Arabia, and her ultimate liberation in the Netherlands.

Work in progress: *Short Cuts to Enlightenment*, a philosophical fantasy in which Muhammad wakes up in the New York Public Library and is challenged by John Stuart Mill, Frederick Hayek, and Karl Popper.

Christian foster mother fired in UK

Marian Van Til

LONDON – The *Daily Telegraph* is reporting that a foster mother in her 50s, with 10 years' experience, will no longer be allowed to foster children because she did not prevent a Muslim teenager in her care from being baptized. The woman's name has not been published for legal reasons.

The woman, in her 50s, was banned by the local council from further fostering. Due to reduced income, she has lost the rented farmhouse she lived in with her foster children. Another girl she was fostering has been taken back into care.

The woman has launched a legal challenge to the decision. She told the *Telegraph*, "I just want to get my life back. I still hope to resolve this so that I can possibly foster again in the future as I simply enjoy helping young people."

Social service officials "consider that in some way [her foster mother] should have taken steps to prevent the conversion," the woman's lawyer, Nigel Priestley, told the *Telegraph*. Priestley argues that the council has breached Article 9 of Britain's Human Rights Act.

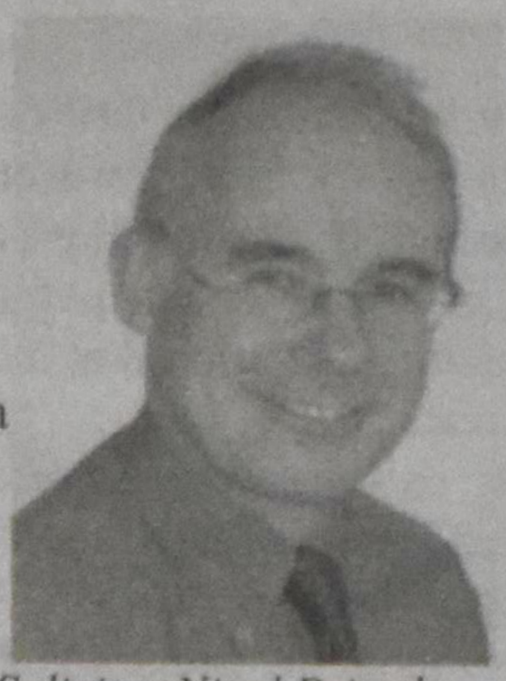
The Muslim girl who is now a Christian was put in foster care after being assaulted by a family member. The woman says she offered to take the girl to family and friends and to find Islamic alternatives to baptism. But "from the word go" the girl said "I want to go to church."

The girl began attending an evangelical church, was converted and baptized. She saw baptism "as a washing away of the horrible things she had been through, and a symbol of a new start," says her former care-giver.

Increasing discrimination

The girl has now been sent back to her parents. There is no concern on the part of the council, apparently, about how the parents are treating their convert daughter, whom Islam considers apostate and worthy of death.

Christian groups and fostering agencies condemned the council's decision, which comes in the midst of a serious shortage of foster parents in Britain. Last year the Fostering Network launched an urgent appeal for at least 5,000 more families to sign up to foster children.



Solicitor Nigel Priestley: Britian imposes "double standard" on Christians

The ruling has increased concerns that Christians are becoming victims of discrimination in Britain. Earlier, British nurse named Caroline Petrie was suspended from her job for offering to pray for a patient. (*See story on this page.*)

The Christian Institute is funding the foster mother's legal case. The institute describes itself as a "nondenominational Christian charity committed to upholding the truths of the Bible." The institute's Mike Judge told the *Telegraph*, "I cannot imagine that an atheist foster carer would be struck off if a Christian child in her care stopped believing in God. This is the sort of double standard that Christians are facing in Britain."

British nurse forbidden to pray

N. Somerset, UK (ICC) – A nurse in North Somerset, UK, has been suspended from her job for offering to pray for an elderly patient's recovery.

Caroline Petrie, a committed Christian, has been accused by her employers of failing to demonstrate a "personal and professional commitment to equality and diversity." She faces disciplinary action and could lose her job over the incident.

Petrie, a forty-five-year-old married mother of two, says, "I simply couldn't believe that I have been suspended over this. I knew I hadn't done anything wrong. All I am trying to do is help my patients, many of whom want me to pray for them."

Petrie is a community nurse employed by North Somerset Primary Care Trust to carry out home visits to sick and elderly patients. She has worked just since February last year.

The incident which led to her suspension took place at the home of a woman patient who is in her late 70s. Petrie explains, "It was around lunchtime and I had spent about 20 to 25 minutes with her. I had applied dressings to her legs and shortly before I left I said to her, 'Would you like me to pray for you?' She said, 'No, thank you.' And I said, 'OK.' I only offered to pray for her because I was concerned about her welfare and wanted her to get better."

Afterward, however, Petrie's patient complained to the primary care trust and Petrie was asked to explain her actions. The patient admitted that she was not offended by Petrie's offer of prayer, just "taken aback."

Many are eager for prayer

Petrie often offers to pray for her patients and many eagerly take her up on it, she says. She either prays with them or prays for them after she has left their home. The nurse has been a committed Christian since she was ten – after her mother died of breast cancer. She and her husband and two sons switched from the Church of England to a Baptist church nine years ago. "My faith is very important to me," she said. "[We] have decided to put God first in our lives."

Caroline Petrie doesn't fear the consequences of praying for her patients

Petrie was previously reprimanded for an incident last fall when she offered to give a small home-made prayer card to an elderly male patient, who happily accepted it. The patient's care-giver, however, raised concerns about it.

Such actions are seen as incompatible with "upholding the reputation of the profession." Her supervisor told her the nursing code states that "you must demonstrate a personal and professional commitment to equality and diversity" and "you must not use your professional status to promote causes that are not related to health."

Petrie says she stopped handing out prayer cards, but it is more and more difficult not to offer them. "My concern is for the person as a whole, not just their health."

There has no been no word yet about the outcome of Petrie's disciplinary hearing, which was held earlier this month.

Caroline Petrie is receiving legal advice from the Christian Legal Centre, which seeks to promote religious freedom and, particularly, to protect Christians and Christianity. Andrea Williams, the founder and director of the centre, says, "We are backing this case all the way."

Two more Christians die in Eritrea

Eritrea (MNN) — Two more Christians have died while in military-style confinement in Eritrea. Glenn Penner with Voice of the Martyrs Canada says that means three believers have died in custody since October.

Thirty-seven-year-old Mogos Hagos Kiflom and 42-year-old Mehari Gebreneguse Asgedom both died in the northeastern Mitire Military Confinement camp earlier this month.

According to a Compass Direct report, Asgedom died on January 16 from ongoing physical torture and complications related to his diabetes. Kiflom died recently after undergoing torture for refusing to recant his Christian faith.

The ongoing persecution has brought glaring attention and international pressure over humanitarian violations in the country, but little action has been taken to stop the persecution.

On the blacklist

Eritrea has been included for some time in the U.S. State Department's list of "countries of particular concern" (CPC) – a blacklist of countries perpetrating severe religious-freedom violations. Eritrea was re-designated a CPC in 2006.

Yet little can be done, Penner says. "Eritrea has denied that there were any Christians in prison at all. They refuse to acknowledge that they are persecuting evangelical Christians. They are able to deny this because none of these men and women have even been brought to trial." Some 2,000 Eritrean Christians are believed to be jailed without a legal charge because of their religious beliefs.

The impact on the Eritrean church has been to drive believers deeper underground. "Pray for those that are in prison," Penner urges. "There are believers being tortured in some of the most inhumane ways. Pray for them, that they'll continue to hold firm in their faith and that God will make himself real to them. Pray for the families as well. Many of them have no idea where their loved ones are or even if they're still alive."

Checking in with CPJ . . . continued from page 3

passionate LLC interns. Danielle Tracey, a Trinity Western student from Maple Ridge, BC, found the internship experience very valuable. She researched the growing income gap in Canada, and was an important part of CPJ's team during the 2008 election.

"These interns are obviously excited to experience the federal political scene, and CPJ is pleased to offer this unique opportunity," says Gunn.

"The move to Ottawa has proven to be a blessing in so many ways," says Vandergrift. "Our members saw this move as important, and they were right – we've become a stronger voice for public justice at the federal level.

"The excitement around being in Ottawa hasn't faded yet. We – CPJ board, staff and members – look forward to how God will continue to bless our presence here."

Karen Diepeveen is CPJ's communications coordinator. www.cpj.ca

"Christ for Saudi" blogger arrested

Marian Van Til, *with files from ANHRI and WEA-RLC*

CAIRO – A young Christian blogger was arrested in January by Saudi authorities and his blog was immediately blocked. Saleh's blog address boldly proclaimed its purpose: christforsaudi.blogspot.com. After his arrest, Hamoud Bin Saleh was jailed in the infamous Eleisha political prison in Riyadh.

The 28-year-old alumnus of al Yarmouk University in Jordan has been arrested twice before. He was imprisoned for nine months in 2004 and again, briefly, last November.

The Arabic Network for Human Rights Information (ANHRI) concludes Saleh's recent quick release occurred because Saudi Arabia was sponsoring a "Culture of Peace" conference in New York at the time. The conference was an interfaith dialogue attended by 80 countries. During the conference, King Abdulleh lamented humankind's "preoccupation with differences between the followers of religions" even while his religious police were arresting a young man whose only "crime" was becoming a Christian in an Islamic country.

Saleh's recent re-arrest comes at a time when the world is preoccupied with economic problems and news organizations are not focused on the rights of Christians, especially, some say, Christians who convert from Islam. ANHRI believes the Saudi government was hoping no one would notice.

Hamoud Bin Saleh is guilty of nothing, says the ANHRI. "The only thing he has done is exercise his normal right to express his opinions and beliefs, which must not be violated under whatever pretext."

ANHRI has condemned Saleh's arrest and holds the Saudi government responsible for his safety. It has demanded his immediate release and called on the Saudi government to meet its commitments and the Saudi king's statements about the respect of freedom of expression and religious tolerance.

The modern Bible belt

WASHINGTON, D.C. (RNS) – Want to be almost certain you'll have Christian neighbors? Move to Mississippi. Tired of those Christian neighbors? Venture to Vermont.

A new Gallup Poll, based on more than 350,000 interviews, finds that the Magnolia State is the one where the most people – 85 percent – say yes when asked "Is religion an important part of your daily life?" And that religion, for almost everybody in the 80 per cent, is Christianity.

Less than half of Vermonters, meanwhile – 42 per cent – answered that same question in the affirmative.

Joining Mississippi in the top "most religious" states are Alabama (82 per cent), South Carolina (80 per cent), Tennessee (79 per cent), Louisiana (78 per cent), and Arkansas (78 per cent).

New England predominates in the top "least religious" states. Following Vermont are New Hampshire (46 per cent), Maine (48 per cent) and Massachusetts (48 per cent); then Alaska (51 per cent) and Washington state (52 per cent).

There actually is a Bible belt, the survey reveals. It runs through the South and into parts of the Midwest. On the other hand, New England and the Pacific Northwest are the most secular parts of the U.S.

Overall, Gallup researchers found that 65 per cent of all Americans said religion is important in their daily lives. The total sample of 355,334 U.S. adults, including respondents with land-line telephones and cellular phones, had a margin of error of plus or minus 1 percentage point. Some states had margins of error as high as plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Frank Newport, editor-in-chief of The Gallup Poll, was surprised that one state – Utah – did not make the "most religious" list, given the state's large Mormon population.

New England Catholics backing away

Mark Silk, director of the Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life, said Gallup's findings reflect research conclusions from the upcoming American Religious Identification Survey, which he is working on with other scholars.

"New England is now slightly ahead of the Pacific Northwest in terms of the high rate of un-churched people," said Silk, co-author of *One Nation, Divisible: How Regional Religious Differences Shape American Politics.*

Although evangelicalism is making some inroads in Western states like Washington and Oregon, he attributes the predominance of New England states in the "least religious" category to demographic trends in the Northeast. "What we are finding ... is a considerable drop in New England in the Catholic population," said Silk, whose Greenberg Center is based in Hartford, Connecticut.

It's a matter of them moving away from the church, Silk said, not the region. "Catholics are holding their own nationwide because of Latino immigration but, relatively speaking, there's little of that in New England."

Silk suspects some Catholics have left the church because of the Catholic sex abuse scandal that first erupted in Boston, which he thinks pushed "loosely affiliated" Catholics over the edge.

Edmonton CRC pastor chosen for denominational slot

GRAND RAPIDS, Mich. (CRCNA) – Rev. Cecil Van Niejenhuis, pastor of First Christian Reformed Church in Edmonton, has been hired to fill a position left open in the CRC's Pastor/Church Relations office following the retirement of Rev. Duane Visser.

Visser, who formally retired in mid-January, served for several years as director of the office that works with churches and pastors who are having difficulties. Whenever possible, he also works to prevent problems from occurring.

"As I see it, this position is about encouraging and promoting healthy dynamics in the relationship between congregations, councils and pastors, and assisting with advice when situations become problematic," says Van Niejenhuis.

Van Niejenhuis was vice president of Synod 2007. He has spent the last 28 years in parish ministry at four CRC congregations in Canada, including 15 years as pastor of First CRC in Edmonton. Before that he served churches in Kitchener (Ontario), Lacombe (Alberta) and Ancaster (Ontario). He is currently working on a Doctor of Ministry degree in organizational systems.

Sensitivity is crucial

"Ideally, I'll work to help pastors and congregations be sensitive to one another," Van Niejenhuis says. "Pastors don't always read their congregations, and congregations don't always understand their pastors."

Helping him in this new position, he says, will be his experience as a classical church visitor and mentor to new pastors, as well as his many years as a pastor. One of the key challenges, he believes, will be helping pastors and churches deal with the diverse nature of the CRC.

"At the local level and more broadly," it is important to view "diversity as a strength which may be harnessed for blessing and enrichment, rather than merely a problem leading to friction," he says.

Van Niejenhuis plans to be based in Edmonton, meaning he will do much of the work over the phone, via the Internet or in making personal visits to churches. He will also spend time at the Grand Rapids office of the Christian Reformed Church in North America.

"Over time, all of the voices want to be heard," he says. "It is exciting to think of the challenge and the chance to develop areas of my own personality."

15,000 Iraqi Christians flee

MOSUL, Iraq (Catholic Culture) – During the fall of 2008, more than 15,000 Christians fled Mosul, Iraq's second largest city, said Chaldean Catholic Auxiliary Bishop Shelmon Warduni while in Rome recently.

"We shouted, but nobody listened to us, either in Iraq, or in America, or in Europe," Bishop Warduni said. "This problem must be known about so the government will do something in the interests of all Iraqis."

Warduni also had a message for U.S. President Barack Obama: "Bring peace, bring security and then leave. [Take] the oil but leave us in peace, then we can live tranquil lives and enjoy our ordinary and human rights."

Beyond hospitality to 'radical welcome'

NEW YORK (Ekklesia) – Hospitality is key to growing any organization, but women in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) are looking beyond sociability to the much deeper relationships needed to sustain a Christian community's alternative values.

The Women of the ELCA network are facilitating both online and in-person discussion of the provocative book *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, the Other and the Spirit of Transformation*, by the Rev. Stephanie Spellers. The online deliberations will include live chats and a blog supported by downloadable resources.

Stephanie Spellers is an Episcopal priest and the lead organizer for the Crossing – an emerging worship community in Boston – while also being the minister for "radical welcome" for the Episcopal Cathedral Church of St Paul.

She describes "radical welcome" as something "that recognizes every person as a bearer of Christ and seriously tries to welcome each person's gifts, presence and power — regardless of the structures of oppression in the wider church and society." Spellers looks at the practical and theological implications of this in an article she wrote for the January/February 2009 issue of *Lutheran Woman Today*, the magazine of Women of the ELCA.

Information about the online discussion can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/dbwwxx> on the ELCA website.

Stories of occupation and resistance (Part III)

As experienced by Machiel Edelman (code-name Dolf) and narrated by his daughter Dineke Poelman.

Caught by the security police

It was June 14, 1944. Dolf had attended a meeting in Gouda and needed to arrange for the forging of some German stamps at the falsification centre in Nijmegen. (This centre was capable of copying all sorts of German papers and stamps.) The originals were kept inside a secret pocket in the lining of his coat. Dolf, who at this time went by the name of Jan Willem van Hamersveld, travelled to Nijmegen by train.

Between Driebergen and Ede all passengers underwent inspection by the SD guards. Everyone had to show his identification card. Dolf handed over his folder with (false) ID to the SD. According to this ID he was 30 years old, three years older then he actually was. When the SD guard continued to look through the folder, he discovered, to Dolf's great dismay, an extra ID stamp. To the SD guard this was proof that the ID was false, and he immediately arrested Dolf.

Arrested and interrogated

After handcuffing Dolf, they took him somewhere else on the train and chained him to another person who had been arrested. In Arnhem he was taken out for interrogation. The interrogator was convinced that Dolf's ID was fake because, according to him, Dolf was much older than 30 years. Two SS men (one of whom was Kotalla) were assigned to interrogate Dolf until he would reveal his true identity. In this, even after severe mistreatment, they were unsuccessful.

Bloodied, Dolf was then returned to the SD guard who had interrogated him before. When asked again how he came into possession of that extra stamp, Dolf was ready with an answer. He had invented a story:

"At the station in Utrecht I met Pastor Willemse. We started talking, and I mentioned that I was on my way to Nijmegen. The pastor became quite excited when he heard this and asked me to do him a favour. It turned out that he had to go to Arnhem to give an ID stamp to someone he did not know. They had arranged to meet at 6 p.m. in the train station under the clock. The man would be wearing a light raincoat and a brown hat. Pastor Willemse then asked me – since I would also be in Arnhem at that time – whether I would do that for him. With some hesitation I agreed to do it, since otherwise the poor man would have had to make a special trip to Arnhem."

After hearing Dolf's story, the SD guard looked at the clock. It was already 6:50 p.m. Immediately he ordered a number of SS solders to accompany Dolf to the train station and watch, inconspicuously, to see whether anyone tried to contact him. Of course no one showed up and Dolf was brought back and placed in a cell.

Escape

The next day Dolf was informed that, since he was from Gouda, he would be taken by two guards to Rotterdam where the interrogation would be continued. Again, he travelled by train, in a separate and guarded compartment.

In Utrecht the train had to wait a while for another train coming from Eindhoven. Both the door of the compartment and the exterior door were open for a moment and, in a flash, Dolf seized the opportunity for escape. Nonchalantly he asked if he could take a sandwich from his bag. They said he could. The bag was in the baggage rack over his head. He got up and, standing in the aisle, took the bag, and with great force slammed it on the heads of the guards. He then ran out of the train and raced down the entire length of the platform with his guards, who had recovered by this time, running after him shooting and yelling "hold him, hold him." None of the waiting passengers paid attention to the order, but he saw, from the corner of his eye, at the end of the platform, German soldiers who also began firing at him. To protect himself from the hail of bullets, Dolf jumped onto the tracks between the platforms and tried to escape under a freight car a short distance away.

SS guards checking trains

As he ducked to go under the freight car, he felt a terrible pain go through his body. He was hit by a bullet in his back and fell down, unconscious. His escape had failed. As he regained consciousness for a moment he noticed many people standing around him. Someone said, "He'll never make it."

Captured again

When he regained consciousness again, he found himself in the Academic Hospital in Utrecht, in a small room with bars in front of the windows and two guards at his bedside. It was a hopeless situation.

But a miracle occurred. It just so happened that he recognized the nurse, Sister Mahler, who was going to be looking after him. Sister Mahler was the sister of his dentist in Bodegraven.

Train station and clock at Nijmegen

The nursing sister was clever enough not to give any indication that she knew him, but Dolf was able to whisper two addresses to her. One belonged to Diny, his fiancee, and the other to his courier. Now at least they would know what had happened to him. That day, June 15, being his birthday, he had planned to celebrate it with Diny at her home in Zeist.

A medical check that day concluded that the bullet had entered his back just half a centimeter away from the vertebrae and had exited in the front just above the lung. Thanks to the bent position he had been in, the wound was not fatal.

His courier, who had been informed, came in the course of the day disguised as a nurse to bring him a cup of coffee. With her assistance he picked up the cup from the saucer and saw a little note with the message: "You will be liberated."

The following day she returned in the same manner with the message: "Tomorrow, June 17, at 9:00 p.m."

New hope

From then on, Dolf tried to exercise so that he would be able to get up by himself. Unfortunately, he was only able to lift himself ten centimeters and became quite worried. How would he ever be able to escape if he couldn't move himself? To make matters even worse, on the morning of Saturday June 17 another bed was placed in his room. He was joined by a bicycle thief who had been shot.

That day the time just crawled by. The clock showed 8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:05, 9:15....

At twenty past ten the door opened, and two men dressed in white doctors' coats (Frits van der Haar and Jaap Buist) entered the room followed by two other men in suits, all carrying loaded revolvers. They made for the guards. "Hands up!"

One shot rang out, followed by three more. The bicycle thief started to scream: "I didn't do anything!" In the commotion the screen divider fell on top of him, and glasses shattered leaving shards of glass on the floor.

There were shouts: "Who is Dolf?" Dolf said "me" and at the same instant got up from his bed!

They handed him a dress jacket and a pair of trousers to cover his hospital gown and ordered him to come along. Socks and shoes were not provided, so he had to walk bare foot between the two resistance fighters down the staircase to the ground floor.

On the way they met a doctor who unexpectedly found himself with a revolver in his face. He began to laugh and said, "Don't worry, I didn't see anything".

Flight

A few members of the resistance group were waiting outside together with their bicycles. Dolf had to seat himself on the back of one the bicycles and then, a little further down the road, step into a truck, which immediately took off. It didn't go far. He was taken in by friends who lived some 300 meters down the road. He had just made it inside when he heard the wail of police sirens going by.

Half an hour later a doctor was at his bedside to check whether all the excitement had brought with it any troubling after-effects.

One hour after his liberation a search warrant was faxed to all the police stations in the country giving a description of him and his rescuers. The rescue activity had led to the death of one guard and the wounding of the other. Although he was more or less free now, Dolf was urgently being sought as a wanted man, a criminal.

For three days he was nursed in Utrecht, close to the Academic Hospital. Then he was transferred to Zeist for further recuperation.

On the 30th of June Dolf moved to Bussum where he had been assigned a new hiding place and where, thankfully, he was able to walk and bike again. But as a wanted man he had to remain extremely vigilant.

For his entire life, Dolf would suffer from that interrogation in Arnhem, the bullet wound, and Kotalla's kick to his back. But his gratitude towards his Heavenly Father for the miraculous liberation was enormous. He had given Dolf the strength to move, a feat which Dolf had thought to be impossible.

(See the March 9 issue for Part 4)

Papal encyclicals and work

(Part I of II)

Bert den Boggende

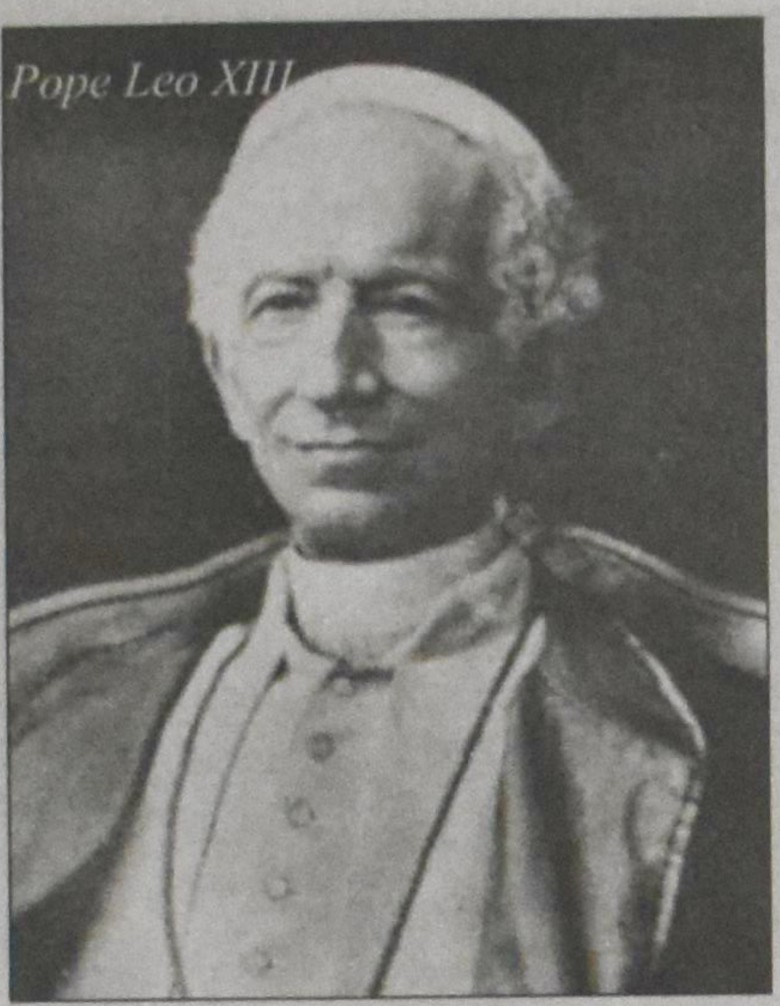
In my article about Luther and work, I suggested that Luther corrected the Catholic view of work, restoring work's positive position. Obviously that can't be regarded as the last word about Catholicism and work. For the church's more coherent view we need to turn to the 19th century. In order to grasp the enormous changes that have taken place since the first papal encyclical on work was published in 1891, it is necessary to take first a look at the *Syllabus Errorum* (syllabus of errors) of 1864.

Syllabus Errorum

The syllabus, appended to pope Pius IX's encyclical *Quanta cura*, states 80 errors without explaining them. For their explanation one needs to consult various previous papal documents. The first 18 errors deal with pantheism, naturalism, absolute and moderate rationalism, indifferentism, and latitudinarianism. Then comes an unnumbered error lumping together socialism, communism, secret societies (such as the Masons), Bible societies, and liberal clerical societies, which all are regarded as "pests." Errors 19-55 deal with the Catholic Church and its rights, notably in connection with the threatened Papal States. The remainder states errors in ethics, marriage, and modern liberalism. It's an error to say that "Protestantism is nothing more than another form of the same true Christian religion in which form is given to please God equally as in the Catholic Church." Not surprisingly, the document received a very negative press in the Protestant and liberal western world, perhaps most notably from William Gladstone, the British Liberal PM. However, even today, many Christians – Protestants included – will still agree with Pope Pius IX that the human reason is not the ultimate standard and arbiter and that the supernatural should be taken into account.

Christian educators may want to read items 45-48 about the state's role in schools. Threatened by the 1848 Revolution and the Italian Unification, the Catholic Church took its stand against the liberal bourgeois state with its industrial capitalism, and democratic and republican principles, while at the same time holding on to its feudal and aristocratic heritage.

Three points may be made here. 1. Socialism and communism were condemned as "pests."It would take another century before Catholics could vote for some forms of socialism. 2. By rejecting the modern liberal state and its culture the pope indirectly took a swipe at capitalism. 3. The syllabus and its accompanying encyclical were silent about the oppressive working conditions of the laboring classes. In my article about the Social Gospel, I have sketched a fairly similar situation for Protestantism. Give or take a few years the Social Gospel Movement and papal interest in work started at about the same time.



Pope Leo XIII

Pope Leo XIII

After a lengthy and tumultuous pontificate, Pope Pius IX died in 1878, succeeded by Leo XIII, a moderate supporter of the *Syllabus*. Halfway into his pontificate, in 1891, he issued his encyclical *Rerum novarum* ("new things"), which pope Pius XI forty years later called the "magna charta" of the Catholic labour perspective. Although the encyclical, subtitled "On Capital and Labour," was a significant departure from traditional policies, its publication should be understood in context. For decades the working masses had been drifting away from the church. Socialism and liberalism were making important inroads in Protestant as well as in traditionally Catholic countries. There was much labour unrest, especially in Britain Catholic leaders. Notably Anglican convert Henry Cardinal Manning, had become involved in labour affairs. As the well-known historian Kenneth Scott Latourette noted, "In a land seething with unrest among the toilers...the Roman Catholic clergy and laity were active in efforts to alleviate the injustices of the social order. Manning in particular was outstanding in helping to settle strikes [notably the 1889 London dock strike]...and in efforts to improve the lot of labourers, whether in agriculture or industry."

The encyclical, 20 pages long excluding its endnotes, laid the foundation of Catholic views on capital and labour for decades to come. According to Leo, the state had the obligation to promote social justice through the protection of rights, while the church was obliged to speak out on social issues in order to teach the correct social principles and ensure class harmony. With the abolition of guilds the workers had been left without protection and had been surrendered to the "hardheartedness of employers and the greed of unchecked competition." The result was enormous fortunes for some and utter poverty of the masses, a situation aggravated by the rapacious usury of the few rich laying their yoke upon the teeming masses (§3). The solution suggested by socialism was that common property should be administered by the state.

While Leo accepted socialism's analysis of the "mischievous state of things," he regarded the solution as unjust (§4). He argued that man, preceding the state, had prior rights in providing for the substance of his body. Moreover, God had given the earth for use and enjoyment to the whole human race, and thus there could be no bar to owning private property (§7-8). Leo's defence of private property, obviously lauded by the propertied class, was, however, not absolute. Appealing to medieval theologian Thomas Aquinas, Leo noted that material possessions were not one's own but had to be shared without hesitation with those in need. He warned the rich that they had to give account of their riches to the Supreme Judge (§22). Thus, while rejecting socialism's community of goods, which injured those whom it intended to benefit (§15), Leo made private property a means of service. It seems to me that, if Calvin had lived in 1891, he would wholeheartedly have agreed.

For the worker to obtain property he had to obtain remunerative labour (§50). Since the father should provide food, according to the "most sacred law of nature," he needed ownership of productive property (§13). While wages were regulated by free consent, that was not the whole story. The bargain ought not to be insufficient to support frugal and well-behaved wage earners (§43-46). Although Leo didn't mention the term "family wage," this seems to be the implication. Be that as it may, he promoted wage contracts between workers and employers.

Unions

Several paragraphs deal with the consequences of Gen. 3:17, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life." Leo noted that there would be pains and hardships until the end of time. But hardship and poverty were no disgrace, and as Jesus' early life made clear, there was nothing to be ashamed of in earning one's bread by labour (§17, 18, 23, 24). However, in extreme cases of poverty, public aid should be made available (§14), one of the few times Leo allowed limited government interference.

Leo saw the church's role in case of poverty as twofold. While people should be content with frugal living, the church should desire that the poor should rise above poverty and wretchedness. In addition, it should intervene in behalf of the poor by setting on foot and maintaining many associations for the relief of poverty (§28-29). This didn't only mean deaconal work but also unions, a replacement of guilds. Leo based his biblical justification for unions on Eccl. 4:9-10, "Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. If one falls down, his friend can help him up" (§48-49).

While favouring unions, not all were acceptable. Since some were anti-Christian, Leo suggested that they "should be so organized and governed as to furnish the best and most suitable means for attaining what is aimed at. They must pay special and chief attention to the duties of religion and morality" (§57). This paragraph became the basis for separate Catholic unions in for instance the Netherlands and Quebec.

Moreover, some unions favoured strikes, which, Leo argued, disturbed public peace and threatened the commonwealth. Thus strikes would rupture the harmony between classes (§36-39). While Marx had propounded class warfare, Leo saw the church's task as one promoting harmony. This ideal didn't imply a glossing over why there were strikes. Strikes, he noted, tried to "save the unfortunate working people from the cruelty of men of greed, who use human beings as mere instruments for money-making" (§42). Against unrestrained capitalism Leo advocated not only unions but also shorter work hours, especially in mines, work suitable to age and sex, and collective bargaining, particularly as an alternative to state intervention. As paragraph §45 made clear, the free operations of market forces should be tempered by moral considerations.

Paragraphs §45 and 20 could be regarded as the heart of the encyclical, especially in regard to the relationship between worker and employer and their respective duties. Admittedly, they repeat to some extent what has been explained above, but the repetition seems worthwhile. Paragraph 45 reads: "Let the working man and the employer make free arrangements, and in particular let them agree freely as to the wages; nevertheless, there underlies a dictate of natural justice more imperious and ancient than any bargain between man and man, namely, that wages ought not to be insufficient to support a frugal and well-behaved wage-earner. If through necessity or fear of a worse evil the workman accept harder conditions because the employer or contractor will afford him no better, he is made the victim of force and injustice." The workers' duties, paragraph 20 noted, involved "fully and faithfully to perform the work which has been freely and equitably agreed upon; never to injure the property, nor to outrage the person, of an employer; never to resort to violence in defending their own cause, nor to engage in riot or disorder, and to have nothing to do with men of evil principles." The wealthy owners and employers were bound by other duties: "not to look upon their work people as their bondsmen, but to respect in every man his dignity as a person ennobled by Christian character...[not] to misuse men as though they were things in the pursuit of gain, or to value them solely for their physical powers – that is truly shameful and inhuman.... The

Continued on p. 12

Corinthians

A pagan dream world and apostolic sobriety

Come back to your senses as you ought and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God - I say this to your shame.
I Cor. 15:34

A.A. VanRuler

Suddenly Paul becomes very serious. Here he will speak in an admonishing and correcting fashion. He says that in the Corinthian church they should finally quit their erroneous ways and misinterpretations of the resurrection. "Would you finally get with it?" he calls out to his flock.

Is this sobriety?

Now this is quite noteworthy: He reproaches the ones who do not believe in the resurrection that they are living in a dream world, that they do not live a life of sobriety. At first glance, one would assume the exact opposite. The idea of resurrection, after all, seems to our sober understanding of life a bit of a mirage,- a dream world. All one has to do is to consider death, the cemeteries and the wonderful tombstones displayed to realize the unlikely expectation of a resurrection on the part of some. So, at first glance, the idea of mortality is much simpler and much more easily acceptable. People who are quite sober in their thinking can believe in that kind of thing. And if you're quite levelheaded, you content yourself with the thought that dead is dead and that's it for you. We do not see or experience anything other than that. The rest is wishful thinking – a sober person tends to think that way.

However, the apostle thinks quite differently. He sees the pagan world as living a pipe dream. This counts for pagans who believe in the soul's immortality as well as those who believe in the finality of death. From the viewpoint of the apostolic gospel, both are in a kind of drunken stupor, in the great river of life followed by death. One feels that this is the only reality and that there is a constant exchange between the two. In autumn the leaves fall off the trees, and in spring they re-appear. This seasonal change in nature is the only experience of a person living a pagan life.

Such a one may add that this "river of life" is a divine reality, but he or she may also leave that out. That does not matter much. In both, it ultimately means the same thing. What's important is that this person is locked up in a world and in a being that shows the images of both life and death. With that thought, that person inebriates herself and laughs at the gospel of resurrection.

A matter of life and death...and God

True sobriety, however, consists in that one does not simply accept the two givens – life and death – but three, namely the one of life, the one of death and the one of God. And then in such a way that God is not simply equated with life, also not with death, but not at all with the unity of life and death.

Life and death are two distinct creaturely givens, but God is the Creator. He is beyond both and also beyond their contrast and unity. God is Lord over life and death and *beyond* life and death. Creating, he calls into being, and judging, he lays creatures in the dust of death. That we are born at all is God's act and that we die, as well. But he also pulls us through the waters of death.

Indeed, *through*, but also to the other side. He also raises us again. From God's viewpoint, who is Lord over life and death, resurrecting is the simplest and most obvious matter in the world. But to realize this one needs to take seriously into account that God *is* and that he is God the Creator, quite distinct from his creation.

That is the kind of sobriety to which Paul calls his brothers and sisters. One must not simply think in a straight line of life and death but live and think in the triangle of life, death *and God*. That is the real sobriety of thinking because, not ignoring any, it takes into account *all* the data. It does not deify the two – life and death – by ignoring the last and most important one, namely God himself. As long as one experiences things in a sinful sort of way, not as they are in reality but in the pipe dream and darkness of paganism, then one is ignorant of God.

Are there people in the midst of our churches 'who are ignorant of God.'

Un-knowledge

That last part probably contains a mocking remark on Paul's part. Literally, he says that they have an *un-knowledge*, an *agnosia* of God. That could be a mocking remark addressed to the people who think they have *gnosia* in the church of Corinth.

These people used to brag about their knowledge, their *gnosis*, their great insight in things. Habitually, these people insisted on experiencing things in a very profound and spiritual manner. Exterior material and corporal existence is, according to them, only the bad outside of things. The only thing that counts is the spiritual *inside*. That's why these people can smile so condescendingly about such a primitive and childish thought such as the resurrection of the *flesh*. In their spirituality they think that it isn't so bad at all that the body is consumed in the grave.

To them Paul says now: you, who are bragging so much about your spiritual knowledge, you really do have an un-knowledge of God, an ignorance of him who has created heaven and earth and who has created mankind *in the flesh*. You people are not aware of one iota of what this entails, namely that God *is* and that he is God. When Paul realizes their total unbelief in the resurrection of the *body*, he even gets somewhat angry and says, "I say this to your shame." There is shame heaped upon this Christian church: that there are people in the midst of it who are ignorant of God.

There is shame heaped upon this Christian church: that there are people in the midst of it who are ignorant of God.

Our shame

That is, after all, the simplest thing of a faith that subjects itself to the prophetic and apostolic witness: that one acknowledges that God is involved in this and that there's a consequence to that fact. The message of the gospel, especially the gospel of resurrection, has awakened us, has made us alive and has sobered us. It has shown us God in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. And in that, we know God completely in all his power and his being God. If you're still living in that drunken stupor and denial, then that is to your complete shame.

Are we being reprimanded as well by the apostle? Are we also ignorant of God? Do we realize him so completely that for us the resurrection of the body is the clearest and surest thing in life and death? Do we breathe, even now, the fresh morning air of the resurrection? Admit it, most of the time we tend to live in the nightmare and depression of paganism. But really – that is to our shame.

Translated by Bram Hoff of St. Catharines.

Papal encyclicals . . . *continued from p. 11*

employer must never tax his work people beyond their strength.... His great and principal duty is to give everyone what is just" (see James 5:4).

Leo regarded government as the promoter of the common good, protecting justice and having control over the economy, although not interfering in it. Thus when labour was made a commodity, the government was within its rights in endeavouring to prevent its exploitation. It was to be an arbiter in the midst of conflicting interest groups rather than an agent of the owning classes. Society, he held, was an organic, social unity rather than an aggregate of many individuals united by a legally constituted organization, as liberals posited.

Thus, like pope Pius IX, Leo rejected liberal democracy and its concomitant secularization of social institutions that made religion a purely personal and private affair. And like his predecessor, he favoured just prices and just institutions, thus limiting the freedom of the owning classes. Although he didn't state so, there is a sense of planned economy, a hint of socialism picked up many decades later.

Bert den Boggende (bertdenb@yahoo.com) has a Ph.D. in Britsh history and is a retired teacher who still does some substituting. He lives in Brooks, Alberta. (This article will be concluded in our next issue.)

Words from Wild Horses
Kenny Warkentin

The street that called my name!

I have been watching as the inner city has become a darker place – more crime and less action against it. During a ministry experience my wife shared with me a story of someone who said the street was calling them. I was reminded of my own personal calling to the street.

There is a night smell, which is often sweet in aroma. You can smell the trees, grass – nature at its best. The sounds, the sites, the adrenaline rush of getting a fix. Be it drugs or sex, there is a draw. It is a deep pull toward something you know is not good for you; yet, you long for it at the same time. Often the longing beats the "not so good for you" thought. So what is one looking for when the street calls your name? For me it was validation through anonymous sexual encounters. I knew where to go, when to go and what to do. It didn't matter how my day was going. I could be connecting with people, socially, having the time of my life, and then I'd go home and it would call me. It was as if I needed the icing on top of the cake that I had already consumed. I wanted more. I wanted the intimacy, as false as it was. I wanted the validation, as degrading as it was. I would go to all lengths to get these needs met. Sometimes money changed hands, but I was selling myself short. I was selling myself for a quick fix to solve any relational or emotional void that I felt.

Little understanding

Now I have come to realize that the needs for validation and intimacy are legitimate but not in regards to getting them through anonymous sexual encounters. But I also realize on looking back that there were few people who could or would understand what I was going through. Who wanted to hear about another sexual fall, or getting drunk or high and then spending hours on the street, sleeping with whomever took a fancy to me or took initiative to pursue me? Little did I know then that Jesus was there. He was walking the street with me, knocking at my heart. Yet I needed someone in the flesh to share the good news with me, to call me on my behavior by admitting their own brokenness. No one asked how are you "really doing." Instead, they accepted my "fine" as written in stone. No one really wanted to get to know the street that faced them every Sunday morning. I learned the hard way. I had to come to the end of my rope, out of hiding and off the street, willing to take a risk of transparency with others and with Christ.

Jesus began teaching me by the Holy Spirit that I needed to live life differently, that I needed to feel the emotions, rather than quickly numb it through sex. I needed to feel intense pain, in order to heal, to grieve, to mourn, to then be able to stand, dance, rejoice.

A challenge

Are you willing to go deep with someone? Are you willing to die for someone? Are you willing to give till it hurts, care about someone till you weep uncontrollably? Are you willing to risk having them be a part of your life, to see your issues? Are you willing to be robbed, cheated, spit at, scorned? Are you willing to get involved past the statement of "I'm fine"?

Maybe I think about these things and write about these things because I live in the inner city, and see little change? I see few people standing up, and I am scared that it might be me who is being called to take a stand. Christ is calling me to make Mercy and Justice my friend. To be the extender of grace, yet call forth justice against drug dealers, slum landlords, corrupt cops, and politicians. It scares the crap out of me, because I feel so insignificant. Who am I but a follower of Christ? Who am I but one who has walked the streets that called my name. So, I pray that you who read this may feel inspired to get out into the streets, walking, serving, and loving, because Jesus, the one who inspires us, did just that!

Kenny Warkentin works as the Resource Outreach Coordinator for Living Waters Canada – Central. His words do not reflect his position at Living Waters, rather are everyday thoughts as he walks in brokenness with the broken. Working for a Para-Church organization allows him to minister and speak to people of many different denominations. He is an artist and his passion is in photography (he really likes his Pentax K1000). He has studied art in Winnipeg, Vancouver and works with mixed media. He is married to Paula and they attend Soul Sanctuary in Winnipeg. (Kenny@livingwaterscanada.org)

Getting Unstuck
Arlene Van Hove

"WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME" attitude just does not cut it

We remain a young nation, but in the words of Scripture, the time has come to set aside childish things. Barrack Obama

Some years ago when I was involved in encouraging our denomination to recognize the equality of women when electing deacons, elders and pastors, a gentleman (not from our congregation) came up to me and suggested, "Men would go for women's equality if there was *something in it* for them." I was so startled I stared at him for some time trying to figure out if he was joking. But he continued, "You need to sell the issue in a way that is appealing to men. I assure you, if there is *something in it* for them, they will go for it." I was so troubled by this exchange I dropped out of the cause for a while.

Christians caught in the meltdown

What brought the above experience out of the closet is a recent column written by Douglas Todd, an Ethics and Religious columnist for *The Vancouver Sun.* His headline and subtitle reads: "Healing the Battered Economy means going beyond the 'self.' 'What is in it for me' is not an attitude that will work in times we face."

Todd writes that many Christians who bought into the prosperity gospel message – believing that "God will provide worldly wealth if we just give our soul to Jesus Christ and our donations to the church" – became victims of the economic meltdown. He further writes that personal greed is alive and well in Christians circles. It seems Michael Lindsay, author of "Faith in the Halls of Power: How Evangelicals joined the American Elite" found precious few Evangelical executives distinguishing themselves from their secular peers – most tried to justify their astonishingly luxurious salaries.

However, it is Todd's reference to Martin Marty, from the University of Chicago Divinity School and one of the most distinguished religious historians in North America, that caught my interest. Marty firmly believes the economic meltdown grew out of a growing global obsession with the "self." He stresses that, while we are aware of our virtues, knowledge, power and security, we are clueless about our vices, greed, ignorance, weakness, and insecurities, to name a few.

Unfortunately, I agree with him. We are too fixated on the self, while not in tune with our vices. This may surprise some of my readers since I regularly suggest we focus on our self to become "unstuck'" or "more aware" of our feelings, thoughts and behaviours. Yet, there is a huge difference between being "fixated on the self" versus "valuing ourselves."

What is the difference?

Being "fixated on the self" is a needy type of selfishness. Theorists refer to it as *egotism* or *individualism*. When we are caught in this brand of selfishness, we are not only hungry for power, affirmation or recognition, we are also driven to use and impose our self-serving needs on ourselves and others. Furthermore, our consumer-driven society fosters this kind of preoccupation with self because it thrives on our wanting more and more products in order to feel good about ourselves. Plus, when we struggle with life's challenges, we automatically think in terms of "what's in it for me" and try to solve our problems with this goal in mind. This narrow focus generates pride and defensiveness, which leaves little room for self-reflection and stunts our emotional growth, keeping us clinging to "childish things."

But the other kind of "self focus" allows us to value ourselves and pursue decisions that help us become persons of substance. It challenges us to step outside of everyday values of economics, busyness, goal-driven days, and pressures of getting life "right." Martin Luther King or Mother Teresa can be the ultimate model of such substance, but we see it just as often in family relationships, church communities and in our places of work.

This type of self-focus is not afraid of self-reflection and can accept our strengths and weaknesses (vices) with a desire to learn from our mistakes. But most of all, this self focus includes relationships with family, faith communities and the world at large.

And so, when healing the battered economy means going beyond the "self," it is not nearly as difficult as we think, because we have always been part and parcel of a mutual growth process, knowing full well…we all eventually…have to grow up!

Arlene Van Hove (avanhove@shaw.ca) is a therapist and a member of the Fleetwood CRC.

Feeling and healing

Wynne De Jong Vandezande

I'm squishing up a baby bumble bee
Won't my mommy be so proud of me
I'm squishing up a baby bumble bee
Ooo Eee all over me!

This is a little ditty my daughter came home with one day after enjoying summer school. I heard her singing it while swinging and wondered what the words were. Yesterday, as I was ironing, the tune came back to me. I thought about some of the issues on my mind that have been resurfacing lately. My mom would surely not open a can of worms but would promote peace. She had many spiritual gifts – wisdom, listening, knowledge, service, teaching – to mention but a few. My dad – he stressed justice and fairness using wisdom, listening and knowledge, but was not intimidated by the challenges or fearful of the consequences when confronting the truth.

Need for compassion

These thoughts brought me back to a real life story I heard many years ago. A church elder had been unfaithful to his wife, having had an intimate, sexual relationship with a male lover. Even though the family knew how their spouse and father had contracted a sexual disease, they forgave him and cared for him with love, tenderness and compassion as he lay on his bed day after day, until he entered another room which had been prepared for him.

At times, I reflect on other situations I have experienced. It's difficult to understand why some churches and Christian institutions would not offer the same compassion, love and forgiveness offered by this family. The Bible tells us: "judge not that we might not be judged." How can persons in power cast the first judgment stone when they have not sat down and listened to the other person's side of the story? How can judgment sometimes be so severe and hasty that the accused person cannot go through a process of healing and forgiveness from our merciful and gracious God?

Didn't Jesus show compassion, love and forgiveness to the woman at the well and to the woman caught in adultery when the accusers were going to stone her? Jesus' words must have reminded them of their own sins and shortcomings as they left in disgrace. Sometimes the persons sitting in judgment have gone through similar situations themselves and have not been found out. Their lives go on more and more hypocritically and judgmentally. This is pretty pathetic, but I must admit and apologize that I have also been guilty at times of rash judgment.

Painful separation

Do we realize the consequences for the persons being cast out of their church and shunned, sometimes even by family members and friends who believe the church's judgment because it came from those in "authority"? Don't the shunned need to find a new community and friends? I have met many who have found an accepting community where they can be involved, using their God-given gifts and talents. But I have also sadly witnessed many who wish to have nothing more to do with churches, faith communities and all the healing power they can offer and embody.

I remember as a young child the reading of an announcement by the pastor that a brother of a church member had resigned. We sadly looked on while the resigned member's brother and family left the congregation crying, filled with sorrow as they believed their loved ones were "lost," cast out of God's grace. It left a deep impression on me.

Perhaps it would be helpful if we had a humble spirit and attempted to "remove the plank from our own eye, and then we can see clearly to remove the speck that is in our brother's or sister's eye." (Luke 6: 42) It is difficult to apologize and change our attitude, but I'm sure we will be blessed abundantly as we continue to practice God's saving power and grace.

Now when I squish a baby bumblebee, I must remember the possible consequences, but also the opportunities for good. Maybe my mom would be proud of me, and I know my dad would affirm me. They would assure me and say, "Don't be discouraged." Perhaps they would quote Scripture: "Be strong and courageous.... For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9)

Wynn (front row, third from left) and her sisters at a family reunion.

Healing experience

Just last summer, the De Jong clan gathered together for our 37th year to spend time sharing, caring and having fun, fortunately, mostly in the sun. We were able to experience this great privilege with joy and extreme gratification as we hold forgiveness and family values high. Otherwise, this would not be possible for a whole week as 130 to 160 people cannot all think alike and have the same values, talents and ideals. But we can talk about them, discuss them, thus allowing us to grow together in God's grace and move on in freedom.

The siblings, spouses, cousins and grandchildren enjoyed the beach and water, the Olympic Games, Volleyball Tournaments, Baseball, Capture the Flag, eating, drinking, fishing, boating, crafts, reading books, book discussions, meditations, special music and worship service, all organized by different family members with their unique gifts. What a great week we had! Thank you Lord, for all your goodness and blessings! You are our great God and greatly to be praised!

We strive to be beacons of hope and agents/channels of reconciliation. Thank you God for directing our paths and giving us wisdom to attempt to hold fast the bonds of peace in Christ.

Wynn De Jong Vandezande lives in Scarborough, Ontario, with

Holland Marsh - Ontario's breadbasket

Getting the Right Plan for Improving the Environment

John Clement

It's always important to keep an eye towards international agriculture when considering policy options for Ontario farmers. And one of the areas that has piqued my interest over the last few months is the commitment made by the United Kingdom to environmental payments for farmers. My assessment is that there are some lessons from the UK we may want to take to heart and others we probably want to avoid.

Back in the 1980s, the UK government decided to start moving away from its system of subsidies and grants for food production. Not only was agriculture being viewed increasingly as industrial, it also appeared that subsidies were leading to significant environmental degradation. The UK government started changing course and developed the first generation of agri-environmental payments to protect and enhance biodiversity, landscape and the historic environment. Capital grants were also added to restore or recreate specified environmental features like wetlands or bogs.

A few years ago, the system was reworked again and farmers were offered a two-tier system of agri-environmental payments. A basic plan pays farmers an annual flat rate of $57/ha across their landbase and doubles the payment if organic production is utilized. A higher level scheme is designed to deliver significant environmental goods and services in high priority situations and areas. To access this funding, farmers have to submit a plan, utilizing any combination of 110 options open for payment. These plans come with a 10-year agreement, provide assistance for farmers needing advice and can deliver annual payments of anywhere from $48/ha to $1,010/ha.

The lessons are abundant. First, it's unlikely and undesirable for Canada to decouple public support from agricultural production in the manner chosen by the UK. Second, Canada has much more room than the UK for vegetation and animal species, suggesting that our agri-environmental payments need to be targeted to pragmatic matters like water protection, carbon sequestration or the protection of unique ecozones. Finally, we will need to strike an appropriate balance between the agri-environmental goods and services we require and the ability of our public treasury to pay for those services.

Agri-environmental payments to farmers make good sense for Canada. There are certain environmental services we could use more of and there are ecosystems that need preservation or improvement. The key thing will be to get the right system in place that matches the public's desire for an improved environment with a system that is cost effective and works for farmers.

John Clement is the General Manager of the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario.

The Liberal Artist
Brian Dijkema

The rhetoric and righteousness of slow food

It's the middle of February as I write this article. I live in the world's second coldest national capital, and that, combined with the fact that it's been a wet year, means that we are buried under a solid four feet of snow. Naturally, I'm thinking about vegetable gardening.

Gardening has been a hobby of mine since a friend and I dug up a weed infested raised bed in the backyard of a house that we were renting with eight other friends during one of our university years. In May we dug up the bed, picked up a couple of lusty looking tomato plants, an understated zucchini plant, and a packet of green bean seeds from our neighbourhood grocery store and posited them in the freshly dug earth. We even dug into our spice cabinet and threw some dill seed into the dirt. We didn't plant with any high-minded agenda; in fact, we did it out of a combination of nostalgia for the gardens our parents used to grow and a strange curiosity about whether that sickly looking little bed would produce anything we could put on our burgers. We certainly weren't making any moral statements about those vegetables.

Ethical food

But there are an increasing number of people who are making strong moral statements about vegetables. People have been speaking for some time now about the need to evaluate the culture surrounding our food. The most articulate of these groups is the Slow Food movement. Their philosophy is that food should be good, clean and fair. Too much of our food these days tastes bland, is produced in a way that harms the environment, and kills the diversity and uniqueness of species and food cultures. Combine that with a global trade in food which does not provide fair wages to those who produce it and you've got their basic equation: cheezies and corn-syrup equal the end of civilization.

Their solution to the problem is a return to the basics of food – more cooking from scratch using basic ingredients. Their ideal is food which maximizes the consumers' stake in the production of food. For some, this means not buying meat. For others it's buying food only from their country, in season or local. One couple in Vancouver, for instance, recently pledged to eat food grown or raised within 100 miles of their home. A whole movement of people are beginning to buy into the notion that the food choices we make are not neutral.

Truthful rhetoric

What is most interesting about this movement is not so much the choices that they make but the rhetoric used to support those choices.

Many of us these days are inclined to equate rhetoric with empty speech. But in the tradition of the liberal arts it is seen as a way in which we use language to speak truth in unique circumstances. Our speech helps shape the truth. For the slow-food movement it is the religious nature of their rhetoric which is most fascinating.

One of their best spokespersons is the novelist Barbara Kingsolver (she wrote the *Poisonwood Bible*). Her recent book called "Animal, Vegetable, Miracle" chronicles her family's move from Arizona to Virginia to conduct an experiment: one year of local, organic, food.

The tantalizing and winsome descriptions of her family's new lifestyle and the degree to which it was a religious conversion speak to something deeper in the movement. In describing their decision to move, she says:

"Most of us are creatures so comforted by habit, it can take something on the order of religion to invoke new, more conscious behaviours – however glad afterward that we went through the trouble. Tradition, vows, something *like* religion was working on us now, in our search for a new way to eat."

Flavourful Christianity

Parallels exist between Christianity and the slow-food movement. For instance, food pilgrimages are now becoming common; People will vacation with the sole purpose of sampling various and diverse local food products – like cheese – along a given route. Discipline and self-denial are also hallmarks: they don't buy meat produced on feed lots or coffee beans from a company who pays their workers poorly. TV dinners are anathema. Sound familiar?

The slow-food movement is also strongly evangelical. And here is where it is most fascinating. Rhetoric is intended to persuade. And the slow-food movements' rhetoric is instructive. In Kingsolver's book it is the descriptions of the struggles, frustrations, and, ultimately, the sweet rewards of gardening which make you want to dig up your backyard and plant beets. In short, it is the living of the choice and the evidence that, indeed, it is better, it is good, that makes it most appealing. The living shapes the language, and the language is delicious.

So too should be the Christian approach to life. If you examine Scriptures, you will find again and again the language of food; salt and first fruits come to mind. In our lives, and in our evangelism, I think it's time we took a page out of the slow food movements' (cook)book. We should be full of the best flavour there is: "taste and see that the Lord is good."

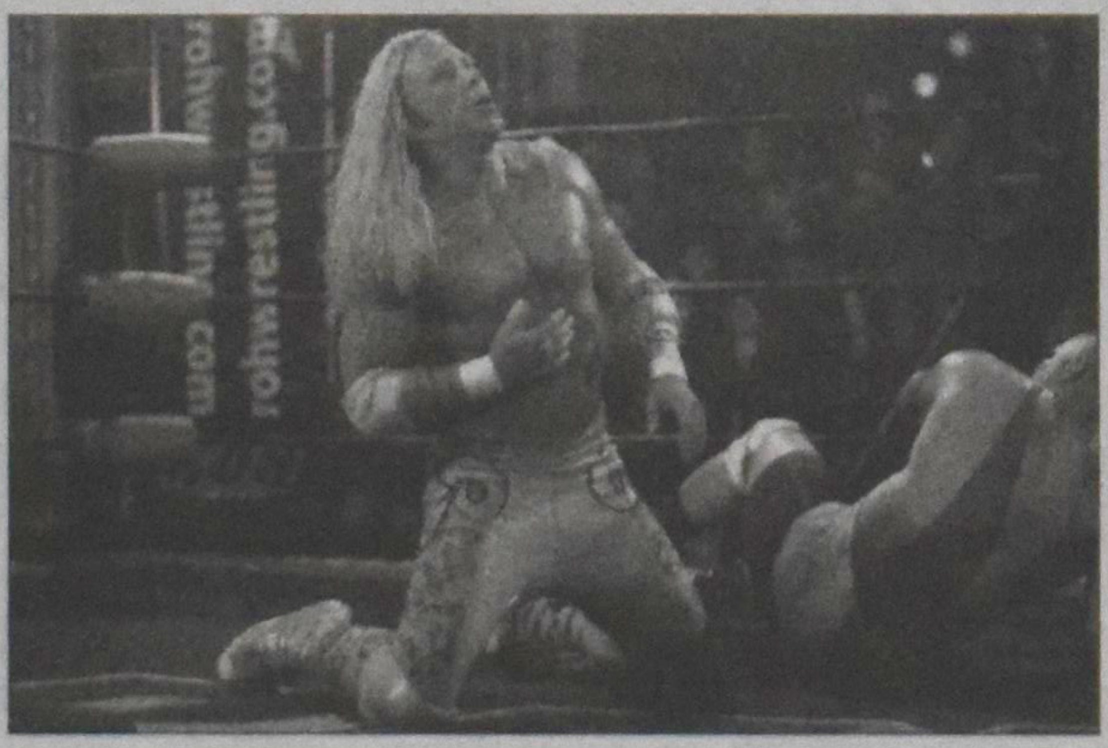
Brian Dijkema (bdijkema@gmail.com) works for the Christian Labour Association of Canada and studies political theory at the Institute for Christian Studies.

The Wrestler: crushed for our iniquities

Brett Alan Dewing

Visionary director Darren Aronofsky's new film, *The Wrestler*, has earned a lot of attention this year, largely due to the performance of its star, Mickey Rourke. While Rourke's performance is layered and immersive, the true pleasure of any Aronofsky film is the depth of thought and theme he embeds in all his work.

The Wrestler follows the life of a middle-aged pro wrestler who was once at the forefront of his profession. Long ago fallen from his Hulk Hogan status, Randy "the Ram" Robinson now barely subsists with blue collar work and weekend fights in lowbrow venues. He strikes up a tense flirtation with a stripper named Cassidy, and both characters stumble toward a redemption that never materializes.



Sex and violence

The film is overflowing with uncomfortable, lengthy scenes of violence (from Randy's job) and nudity (from Cassidy's). While both are shocking, the progressive juxtaposition of the two begins to bring out a compelling message about human society.

Both of the characters are irrevocably caught in a downward spiral that strips them of their identities (Randy's real name is Robin, and Cassidy's is Pam) while devastating their bodies and souls. Randy's body is all bulk and leathery orange skin. It is a body not built for battle but for the presentation of aggression. Likewise, Cassidy's body (on full display) is tattooed and grotesquely sexualized. Both show the battle against age while coming off as elaborate costumes.

Christ in a strip club?

Ultimately, the most telling scene happens early in the film. Cassidy recites Isaiah 53:5 to Randy. In a private room in the strip club, she quotes, "he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace." When he asks where the words come from, she cites *The Passion of the Christ*, a film she loves because "they throw everything at that guy, and he just takes it." An entire article could be written on that statement alone, but what concerns me here is the way in which the verse sheds light on the film's theme.

Both Randy and Cassidy are wounded because of their audience's transgressions. They are the victim-scapegoats of a society that seeks to live out its basest instincts through them. The wrestling fans work out their own aggression by watching men pummel each other. Cassidy's customers indulge their lust through her performance. Both are forced to enact twisted versions of their customers' passions, and that performance destroys them.

Our part in the tragedy

We have not come far since the Roman Empire's "bread and circuses." Now, we simply have breasts and skirmishes. And these downtrodden people, only looking to be valued for *something*, are forced to bear the burden of our sick desire to act out our sick desires. Their chastisement brings us peace. And we, as the cinema audience, carry out the cycle as we find catharsis in the degradation of these characters.

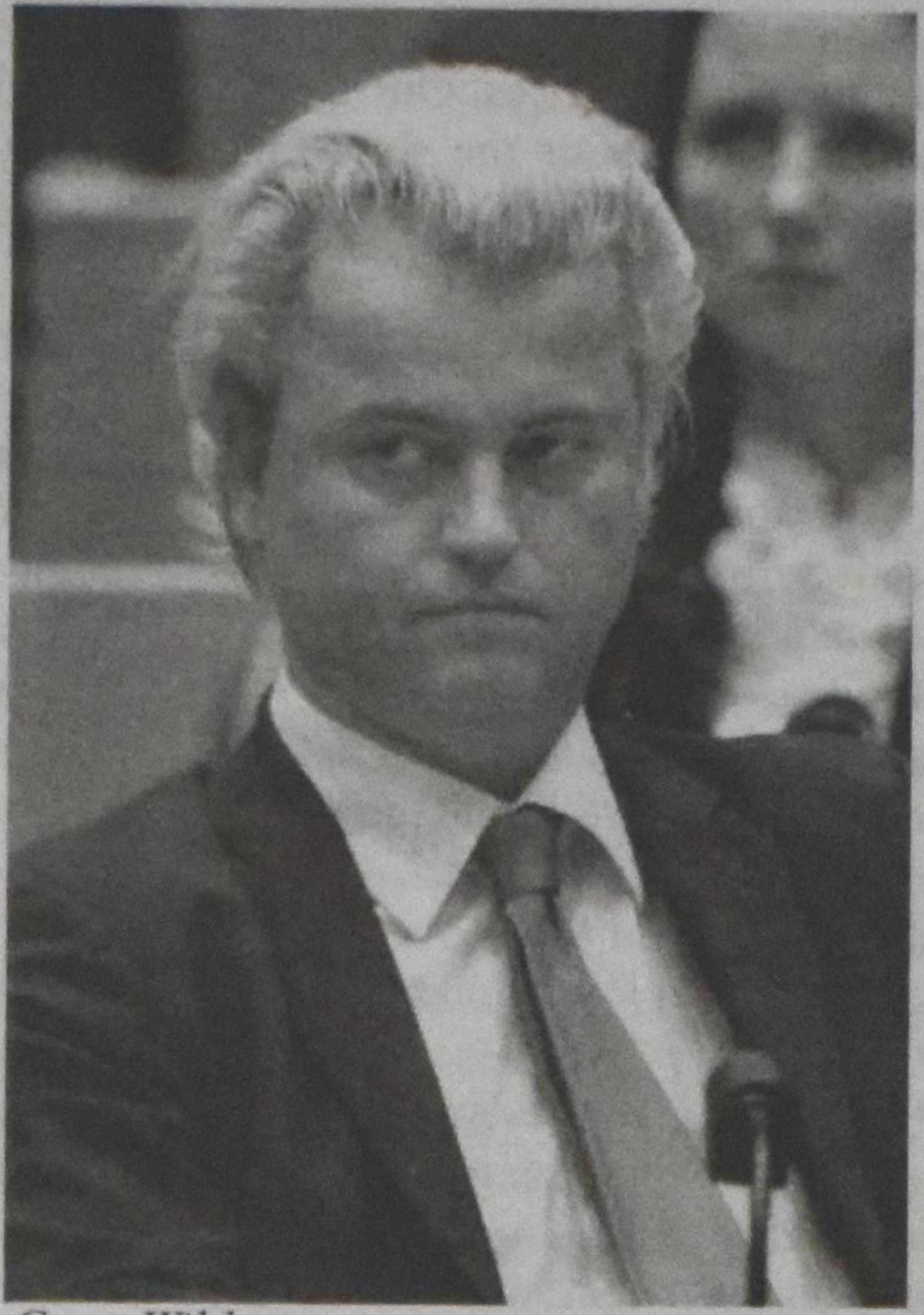
All of this is encapsulated in one perfect image. As Randy recovers from an especially grueling bout, a tattoo on his finger can be seen clearly: JOB. With unclear capitalization, this single word conjures up Job and job. And indeed, here is a man whose job is to be Job for us: to suffer on a bet. Sometimes the wages of our sin include someone else's death, and the film leaves us on an uncertain note, not knowing whether we have just watched a man's death amid deafening cheers.

Geert Wilders' trial: who will be next?

Harry Antonides

On January 21, 2009, Dutch authorities took another step toward the Islamization of Holland. On that day the Amsterdam Court of Appeal overturned the decision of a lower court, which last year had found Geert Wilders, the controversial member of the Dutch parliament, not guilty of hate speech. This lower court acknowledged that some of his statements may be offensive, but they contributed to a social debate that did not give cause for criminal prosecution.

The Court of Appeal's reasoning for overturning this decision is a jumble of contradictions and doubletalk that brings to mind the newspeak of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. The Court gives three reasons for its decision.


Geert Wilders

1984 is now

One, Wilders' views, including the message of his short film *Fitna*, in style and substance are "characterized by biased, strongly generalizing phrasings with a radical meaning, ongoing reiteration and an increasing intensity, as a result of which hate is created...." Wilders has indeed insulted Islamic worshipers by attacking the symbols of their belief.

Two, the Court finds that a possible criminal prosecution or conviction is admissible according to the norms of European jurisprudence, which at the same time "considers the freedom of expression of paramount importance."

Then follows another sentence that is convoluted and without any sense because it is self-contradictory. It says that this Court has concluded that prosecution is warranted, "provided that it is proportionate, does not necessarily conflict with the freedom of expression of Wilders, since statements which create hate and grief made by politicians, taken their special responsibility into consideration, are not permitted according to European standards either."

Three, the Court finds that criminal prosecution is opportune in the Dutch situation because "the instigation of hatred in a democratic society constitutes such a serious matter that a general interest is at stake in order to draw a clear boundary in the public debate."

Corrupted language

The Court explains that the Dutch culture of public debate is based on tolerance of opposing views, while Islamic immigrants may be expected to have consideration for the existing sentiments among the Dutch for their (Islamic) belief, "which is partly at odds with Dutch and European values and norms."

Instead of calling for Muslims to appreciate and respect the Dutch culture, the Court then reiterates its opinion that prosecution of Wilders is warranted because he compared radical Islam with Nazism, which is contrary to the general interest of society.

Here is a clear case of language that lacks any kind of rhetorical firmness and clarity. George Orwell was perceptive when he showed that the destruction of freedom goes hand in hand with the corruption of language. At such a time words are used not to communicate truth but to hide it with hollow words that say the very opposite to what is real.

Truth is irrelevant

The Court does not concern itself with the truth of Wilders' opinions, but with the claims of radical Islamists that their religion has been insulted, which in the eyes of many Muslims calls for the death penalty. Wilders has received many such threats, which in normal times would result in prosecution of those who issue such threats.

But these are not normal times, and though he is a member of the Dutch parliament, leader of the nine-member Freedom Party (VVD), he is forced to live like a fugitive, under 24 hours-a-day police protection, forced to move from place to place and deprived of all the normal benefits of citizenship in a free society.

He has a number of lawsuits pending, including one by an imam who is demanding damages of 55.000 Euros for his hurt feelings. The state of Jordan has requested that Wilders be extradited and tried in a Jordanian court for blaspheming Islam. Now Wilders no longer travels outside the country unless he receives assurance from the government of the country to be visited that he will not be charged or extradited.

His invitation from the British House of Lords to discuss his film was withdrawn after the Muslim Lord Ahmed is reported to have threatened to mobilize 10,000 Muslims to prevent Wilders from entering the House. The Secretary-General of the UN condemned the airing of *Fitna* in the strongest terms. He said, "There is no justification for hate speech or incitement to violence." The irony is that this is exactly the point of Wilders' position.

Merely quoting Islamists

The bitter reality is that the persecution of this member of the Dutch parliament now living under a death threat proves the truth of his contention that radial Islam is incompatible with Western democracy.

Wilders' unpardonable sin is that he insists on taking the Islamists at their words. He has simply stated the obvious. His brief film *Fitna*, though in a provocative way, quotes some of the warlike verses of the Koran and shows images of 9/11 and other terrorist attacks. It also has clips of angry demonstrators shouting the praise of Allah while calling for the death of infidels.

In the Netherlands crowds have shouted an especially revolting expression of Jew-hatred: "Hamas, Hamas, all Jews to the gas." Last October, a Muslim radical with a long police record attacked two police officers in Amsterdam. One of the officers nearly died; the attacker was shot. This event touched off days of rioting and car burning, but the Dutch press avoided any mention of Islamic radicalism

Recently in Copenhagen, Muslim demonstrators were heard to scream Alla-hu Akbar while giving the "Heil Hitler" salute and calling for the death of Jews.

The UN no friend of freedom

While such demonstrations are taking place in many parts of the world, the Islamic bloc at the United Nations is busy furthering the Islamization of the West. In 1990, the 57-member Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) adopted the *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam.*

While it pays lip service to the freedom of all people, it makes very clear that all rights and laws are to be interpreted and applied in accordance with Islamic law. For example, article 24 states: "All the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic Shari'ah."

The OIC, now the largest voting bloc, is determined to use the UN as the wedge to silence all critics of Islam. Since 2005, the General Assembly has passed a so-called anti-defamation resolution, which until now has been non-binding. The OIC has begun a campaign to have the UN adopt a binding resolution, which in effect would criminalize all criticism of Islam.

Last year the UN Human Rights Council – including China, Angola, Cuba and Saudi Arabia – adopted a resolution that moved a step closer to such criminalization. It decided to mandate the Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Expression not only to report violations of this freedom but also to include cases in which that freedom is "abused." Such "abuse" will include all criticism of Islam.

As the Canadian delegation noted: "instead of promoting freedom of expression the Special Rapporteur would be policing its exercise." It is clear that the backers of this anti-defamation resolution want to silence all critics of Islam. Why have the delegations of the free nations not opposed this move in clear and unmistakable ways?

Only recently did the French ambassador on behalf of the European Union warn that the EU would not accept such a resolution, which in fact would destroy freedom of expression. But most of the Western UN members failed to condemn this attempt to silence the critics of Islam. Although the Canadian representative protested against this resolution, in the end Canada abstained rather than vote against it. The U.S. also abstained.

Anti-Israel conference

The next battle lines are now being drawn in preparation for the forthcoming 2009 Durban Review Conference (Durban II). This UN World Conference Against Racism shows all the signs of a repeat performance of Durban I, which in fact became a platform for vicious anti-Israel and pro-Islam propaganda. One of its agenda points will be a recommendation that the UN make defamation of Islam a criminal offence and thus no longer allowed under the "pretext of freedom of religion, counter terrorism or national security."

That the UN has degenerated into a nest of scheming power blocs mostly tilted against the Western democracies is bad enough. But that those very same democracies allow their own legislative and judiciary institutions to silence the critics of radical Islam is beyond belief.

The case of Geert Wilders is especially reprehensible, but the same thing is happening in England, France, Germany, Belgium, the U.S, Canada, and elsewhere. The biggest challenge is to distinguish truth from falsehood. Not a bad rule of thumb is to be very suspicious of the ruling majority, especially if they belong to the herd of the politically correct.

If you really want to understand the full scope of the controversy surrounding Geert Wilders, I can wholeheartedly recommend Bat Ye'or's *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis.*

Harry Antonides (hantonides@ sympatico.ca) is the former director of the Work Research Foundation. He lives in Willowdale, Ontario.

Church leadership: lonely road or shared journey?

Rachel Boehm Van Harmelen

Is it lonely at the top? An increasing number of pastors are saying that it doesn't have to be. Through peer group learning, they're discovering that leadership can be better when it is experienced as a shared journey.

There is little doubt that a pastor's place in the congregation can be isolating. A pastor's position in the church limits his or her access to the social and spiritual support network that other church members take for granted. Indeed, a pastor's need for confidentiality in dealing with members and issues in the congregation can prevent him or her from sharing feelings, frustrations and burdens – even with spouses or friends.

"Leadership has often been identified as a lonely road," says Rev. Henry Kranenburg, pastor of Immanuel Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Hamilton, Ontario. But Kranenburg's recent experiences as part of a pastors' peer learning group have taught him otherwise. Kranenburg and a number of his colleagues formed a peer group, *Leading the Large Multigenerational Missional Church*, to share challenges, best practices and to foster mutual support and learning.

"Our time together as a peer group identified the value of a shared journey of encouragement, support, discovery, prayer, failure, learning, debate and disagreement," says Kranenburg. "Doing this in a safe setting allowed for us to collectively work through things and individually apply them to our particular settings."

According to Kranenburg, he and his peers have discovered that leadership is more than just getting the job done, it is about learning and growth. "We rediscovered that good leadership accomplishes the tasks assigned, but better leadership is that which is challenged and grows in a safe peer setting."

Breaking the isolation

Kranenburg has seen firsthand how peer groups can break down the walls that isolate pastors. "The camaraderie and the times of prayer at our retreats helped us recognize that, in many ways, we deal with the same issues," says Kranenburg. "Our challenges are not unique or peculiar to our particular church or style of ministry."

Peer learning reminds pastors that they are part of a community. "Peer learning groups help fight against lone-ranger styles of ministry that can lead to unhealthy styles of leadership or the burnout and frustration that can come at times," says Kranenburg. That's an important consideration, given that statistics show that one in five pastors suffer serious stress or burnout.

Like Kranenburg, Rev. Ken Krause has come to appreciate the value of peer learning. Krause, pastor of Newton CRC in Iowa, is relatively new to the ministry and is serving his first church. His peer group has been especially important to him and his congregation. Krause's group brings together a number of pastors whose churches are facing transitions. "We wanted to encourage each other to continue working toward excellence in ministry and to develop ideas toward transitioning our churches to become more missions-focused ministries," Krause says.

More tools in the toolbox

Peer groups have multiplied both learning and skills for Krause and his colleagues. "Peer groups give you the ability to synergize," says Krause. "People bring to the group different gifts and different ideas. Even through our informal conversations, we learn so much from each other."

Krause also values the mentoring that has taken place as part of his peer group involvement. "We have a broad range of experience and abilities within our group, and so there is mentoring for the younger pastors and renewal for the more experienced ones," he says.

Rev. Craig Broek serves a smaller, established church in Ridgewood, New Jersey. He recently helped form a peer group, *Fellowship and Formation*, for CRC pastors who share an interest in leadership development. "Developing as leaders doesn't mean that we'll avoid conflict or other difficult circumstances but it does give us a few more tools in the toolbox to help understand those situations and help us to prepare for, react to, and lead through them," says Broek. "Pastors lead whether they want to or not," he says. "If we aren't trained for leadership or developing our skills, we fall into bad habits very easily and the whole organization suffers as a result."

Accountability and support

An important part of leadership is accountability, and peer groups offer that as well. In Broek's peer group, accountability extends to activities like personal devotions. "One of those activities is the commitment to the spiritual discipline of reading the Bible every day and journaling our observations," Broek says. "In our peer group, we're using the method laid out by author and pastor Wayne Cordeiro, which prescribes four steps in the acrostic of SOAP (Scripture, Observation, Application, Prayer)."

Next on their group's agenda, Broek and his peers plan to attend a leadership conference together, to strengthen relationships and trust within the group while growing in their skills as leaders of missions-focused churches.

For Broek, however, the most important outcome of his peer group involvement has been the support and encouragement he receives from the other pastors. It reminds him that he is not alone.

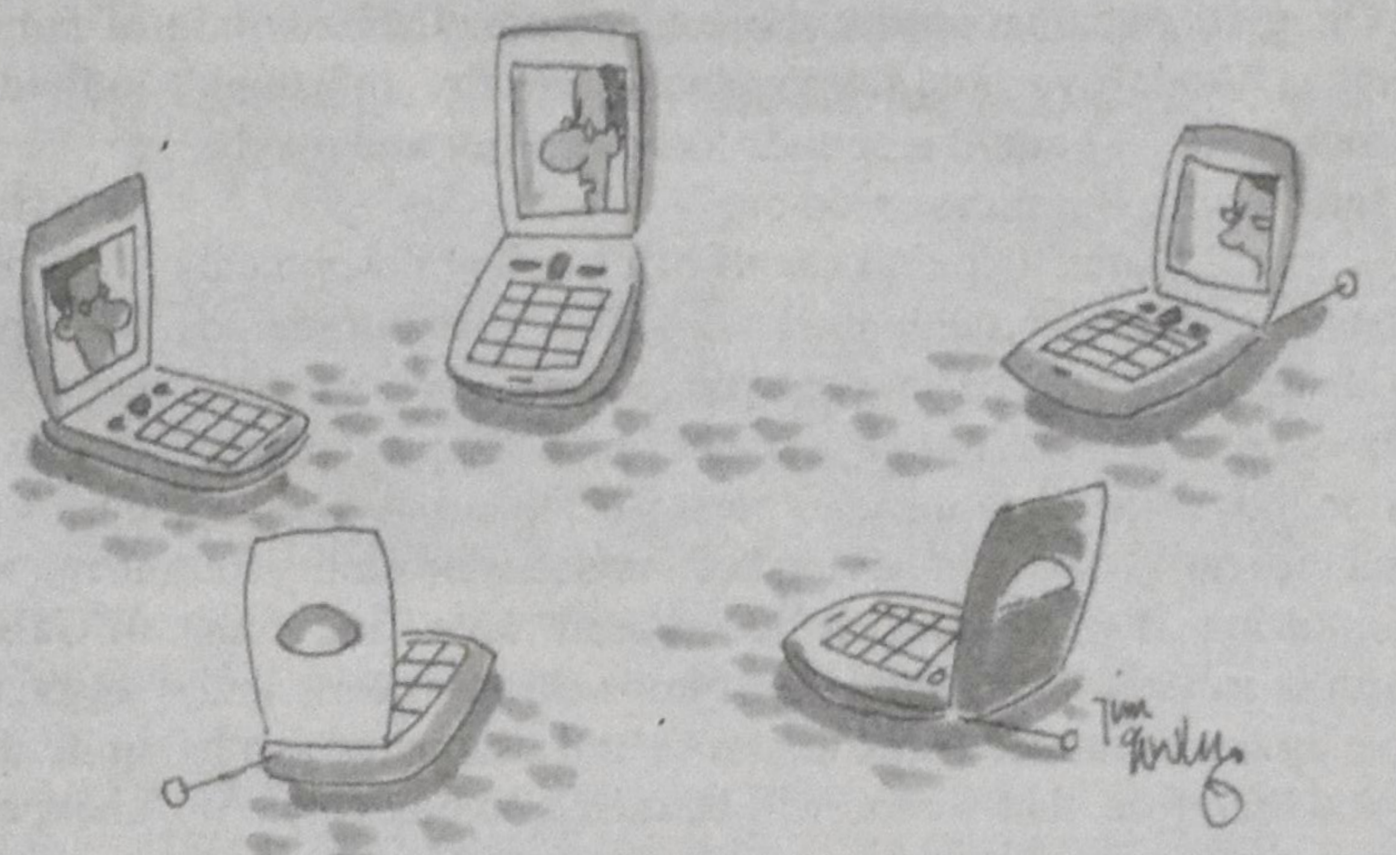
Avoiding tunnel vision

"When leadership development is pursued in a right way, I believe it helps leaders fight against the tunnel vision of their own particular style," says Kranenburg. His peer group learning has taught him to embrace differing perspectives on ministry and differing ways of accomplishing tasks. "Peer groups help pastors learn that the value of working together is in being challenged to think outside of one's normal paradigm and to ask why another approach would or would not be helpful. It leads not only to creative process, but to an increased focus on what the problem or challenge really is and how we might address its resolution."

Finally, what is true about leadership for pastors is also true for the church. Travelling the road of leadership together is so much better than taking the lonely road. "Leadership is not just about me leading," Kranenburg says, "Leadership is about training and delegating the work to those with gifts and always planning and preparing for those who will need to replace them or pick up new areas of ministry."

Church leaders' reading list

- *Building Leaders: Blueprints for Developing Leadership at Every Level of Your Church* by Aubrey Malphurs and Will Mancini
- *The Divine Mentor – Growing Your Faith as You Sit at the Feet of the Savior* by Wayne Cordeiro
- *When the Game Is Over, It All Goes Back in the Box* by John Ortberg.



Pastor Jerry, is this what they mean by "The Emerging Church"?

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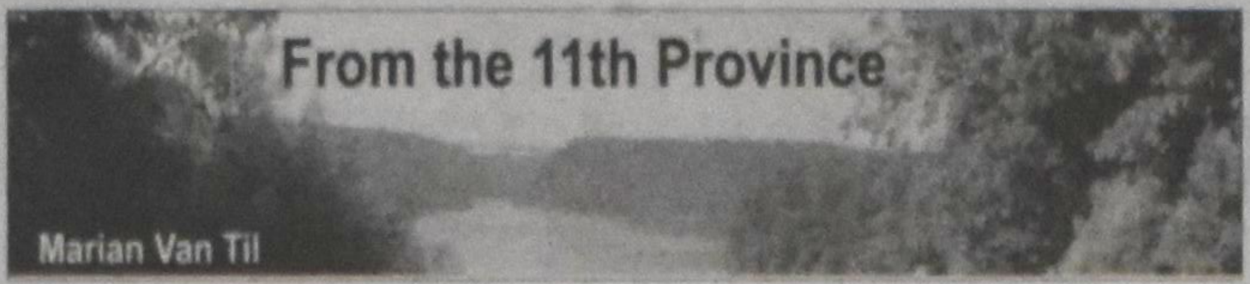
Reflections



The sting of death

Since early childhood I have thought often about death. ("Oh, great, what an upbeat subject," you may already be saying. "And why would any psychically healthy child think about death?") I admit it sounds like a downer and maybe a little weird. But please read on.

I'm no "Goth." I don't wear all-black as a philosophical statement. I don't revel in the Dark Side. I'm not *obsessed* with death. It would be flat-out wrong for any Christian to be obsessed with death. Satan would be oh-so-happy. It would be an indication that for such a person death has overcome, and the reality of Christ having been raised *is* no reality for him or her. If Christ has not been raised, says Paul, your faith is in vain. If you or I don't know in our hearts and live by the assurance that Christ rose and conquered death – and therefore, that we too will be raised on that Day – it doesn't much matter that we say we believe his body got up from the dead on the third day. The magnificent truth of the resurrection is mere disembodied fact.

But when you wholeheartedly embrace that truth and can joyfully confess with our creeds, "I believe in the resurrection of the body," then not only death but life takes on glorious new meaning. In fact, you could say that that confession allows you to be obsessed with *life*.

A line of demarcation

The way people react to death speaks loudly about where – in whom or what – their faith lies. The line of demarcation in that regard between Christians and non-believers is getting starker. I sensed the existence of that line at an early age; you likely did too.

In my childhood it wasn't unusual to encounter death, either human or animal. We Reformed children, when old enough to have an inkling what was going on, were not assumed to be too fragile to be kept from the reality of death. It frequently took members of our church and Christian school community, and sometimes those members were children or teenagers.

A four-year-old girl in our church died of leukemia. Not long after, her mother died of a mysterious disease. A high school boy, brother of a classmate of mine, died of cancer. Twin classmates lost their father. Later, the fathers of two other classmates died. All of these people, young and old, confessed Christ. The sorrow associated with such deaths (heavy as it was) was not without hope. I could feel that in my young bones, hear it in the singing and the words and deeds of church members, and see it in the sorrowing.

But when I was seven or eight, the life of my neighborhood playmate's teenaged brother was snuffed out in a car accident. He had been a wild James Dean type. He drove too fast, and it killed him. I vividly remember the funeral home visitation. It was a sober, hopeless affair covered with a kind of chin-up veneer. His mother clung to a vague notion of heaven for her son (understandably). Young as I was I pitied her and was afraid for them. I was keenly aware that the Motsingers were not Christians. That thought was far more terrifying than that God might suddenly snatch any of us away in death. It haunted me for a while (though my playmate never talked about her brother). Later I wondered what we could or should have done to be better, more blatant witnesses for Christ to that family and other unbelieving neighbors.

Currently, I see the wishful thinking of the bereaved in many of our local paper's obituaries. Only occasionally do we read that Jane or John Doe went home to be with the Lord. "Entered into rest" is common, or for children, "joined the angels" (less a statement of faith than a misunderstanding of angels, not to mention salvation). I'm still taken aback when I frequently read that there will be neither visitation nor funeral, merely a private gathering of family members. Death, as life, for many today is an individualistic, solitary affair.

Death comes nearer

Death visited my own family a few years after Jim Motsinger's death. But it had a thoroughly different kind of sting. An uncle from Grand Rapids, in his 50s, dropped dead of a heart attack. His funeral took place in a large dark-wood-paneled Christian Reformed Church where there was not a vacant seat. My uncle taught theology at Calvin College. That funeral reinforced my parents' lesson to me at an early age that Christians approach death quite differently than other people do. In the face of this unexpected and burdensome sorrow (my aunt was left with seven children), the hope of the resurrection was palpable in the words and deeds of the congregation members – that day and later – and in the Word preached and the hymns sung. That funeral still leaps to mind every time I hear "My God How Wonderful Thou Art." Who but God's own beloved people would call him wonderful in the face of such a death?

Marian's parents

My uncle's dying made me fear that God would take *my* parents from me (my father also had a heart problem). That fear loomed every time I saw a classmate's loss. It was not a fear of slipping from God's hands; it was a fear of dying, and of aloneness and permanent loss.

There is often irony in God's dealings with us, and sometimes the irony feels bitter at first until we submit to God's unfathomable will. God *did* take my parents from me: my mother when I was 16, my father when I was 20. Later, it was my eldest sister, and five years after that my eldest brother. In those sorrows – here's the irony – God destroyed my fear of death and isolation. My parents' deaths solidified and finely honed the faith that they themselves had instilled in me and their four other children. I learned how to trust and pray during the four years of my mother's cancer. I learned, with David, that "all my longings lie open before you, O Lord; my sighing is not hidden from you" (Ps. 38:9).

Crunch time

I include references to those losses (and think also of the loss of many other saints since then) because they occurred within the context of our being children of God and part of a Christian community. That makes those death experiences a deep and profound part of *living* the Christian life. I've understood ever better since that first childhood observation of it that the reactions of Christians to the deaths of their fellow saints embodies our only true hope, which the world can only grasp for.

Sometimes we Christians do conform too much to the world. But at crunch time, when our losses are heavy and our faith really matters, we reveal ourselves to be Christ's witnesses in the best possible way. The main catalyst for thinking again about such things was my reading of a bizarre little news story that surfaced just before I wrote this column.

"Leave a pretty corpse."

Plastic surgery has become big business. There are legitimate medical reasons for it. But there are also thousands of people who are sadly unhappy with the way God created them. Looking one's best is not enough. They are willing to pay big money to attain the physical appearance they believe is so crucial to a happy life. And now, it seems, physical appearance is also crucial to a happy death.

There are people who actually direct that their own bodies, when dead, be submitted to plastic surgery. One must look fabulous, after all. Alive or dead. This outlandish practice could only develop in a foundering (and floundering) secular age that no longer knows how to cope with either life or death. It's hard to imagine that someone whose ultimate concern is that others might see puffy eyelids or a sagging chin on his or her corpse is also concerned about meeting his or her Maker (before or after the plastic surgery).

"It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God," Hebrews warns us (10:31). Most modern people shrug that off. They believe that Michelangelo's scenes of the Last Judgment may be magnificent art, but they're quaint theology. They simply can't believe that stuff.

That's where we come in. We must never be smug about being God's people. We must pray *and work* for Christ's Spirit to transform hopeless lives. "Freely you have received, freely give," Jesus charged his disciples (Matt. 10: 8). And he didn't simply *suggest* that they should go into all the world and preach the gospel – he commanded it. Are we obeying his command?

Marian Van Til worked for Christian Courier *from 1984-2000, and preceded Harry der Nederlanden as its editor. She now lives in Youngstown, NY. She may be contacted by email at: mvantil@roadrunner.com or via her website: www.wordpowerpublishing.com*

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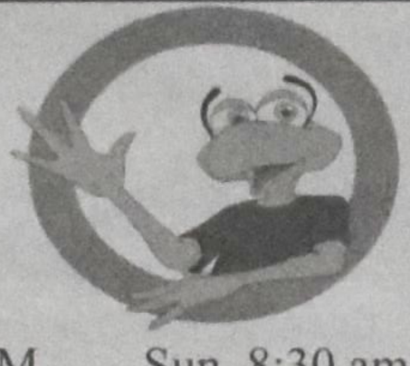

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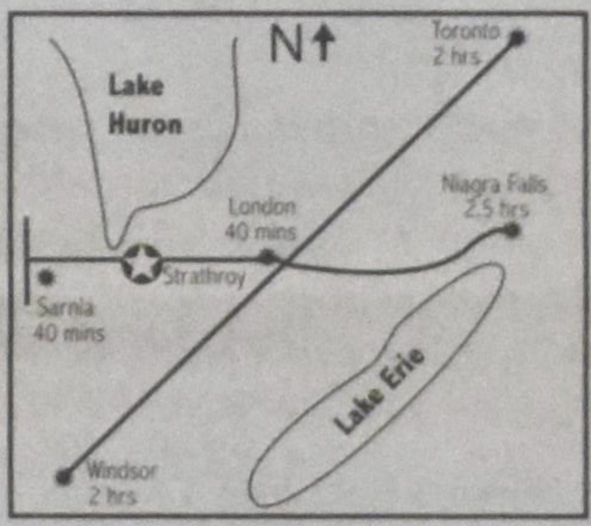

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Birthdays

Tena Kramer

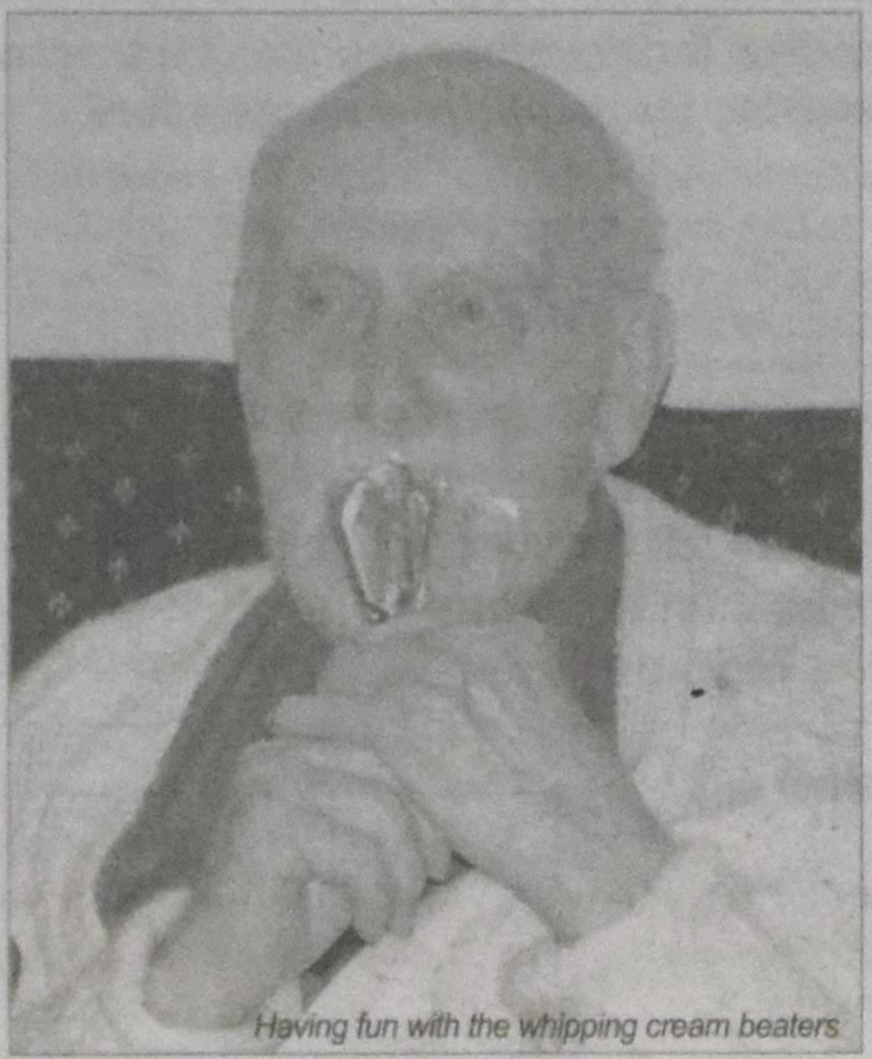
celebrated her **90th Birthday** on February 7, 2009.

Her thankful family:
9 children and spouses
21 grandchildren and spouses
11 great-grandchildren.

Mailing address: Shalom Manor Rm. 417-12 Bartlett St. Grimsby ON L3M 4N5

February 16, 1914, Meerkerk

With thankfulness to God for his goodness and continued blessings, we celebrated the **95th Birthday** of our husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather:


Having fun with the whipping cream beaters.

Dirk Jongkind

With love and best wishes:
Spouse: Rie
Nenke & Rob; Jake & Marion; Ernie & Adriana;
Adam & Judy; Scott & Marisa; Judy & Alan Bennink
15 grandchildren and 13 great-grandchildren
We celebrated with family.

Anyone wishing to congratulate Dirk can send a card to:
Dirk & Rie Jongkind, Holland Christian Homes
Hope Tower 714-7900 McLaughlin Rd S, Brampton ON L6Y 5A7

No gifts. Instead, please send donations to:
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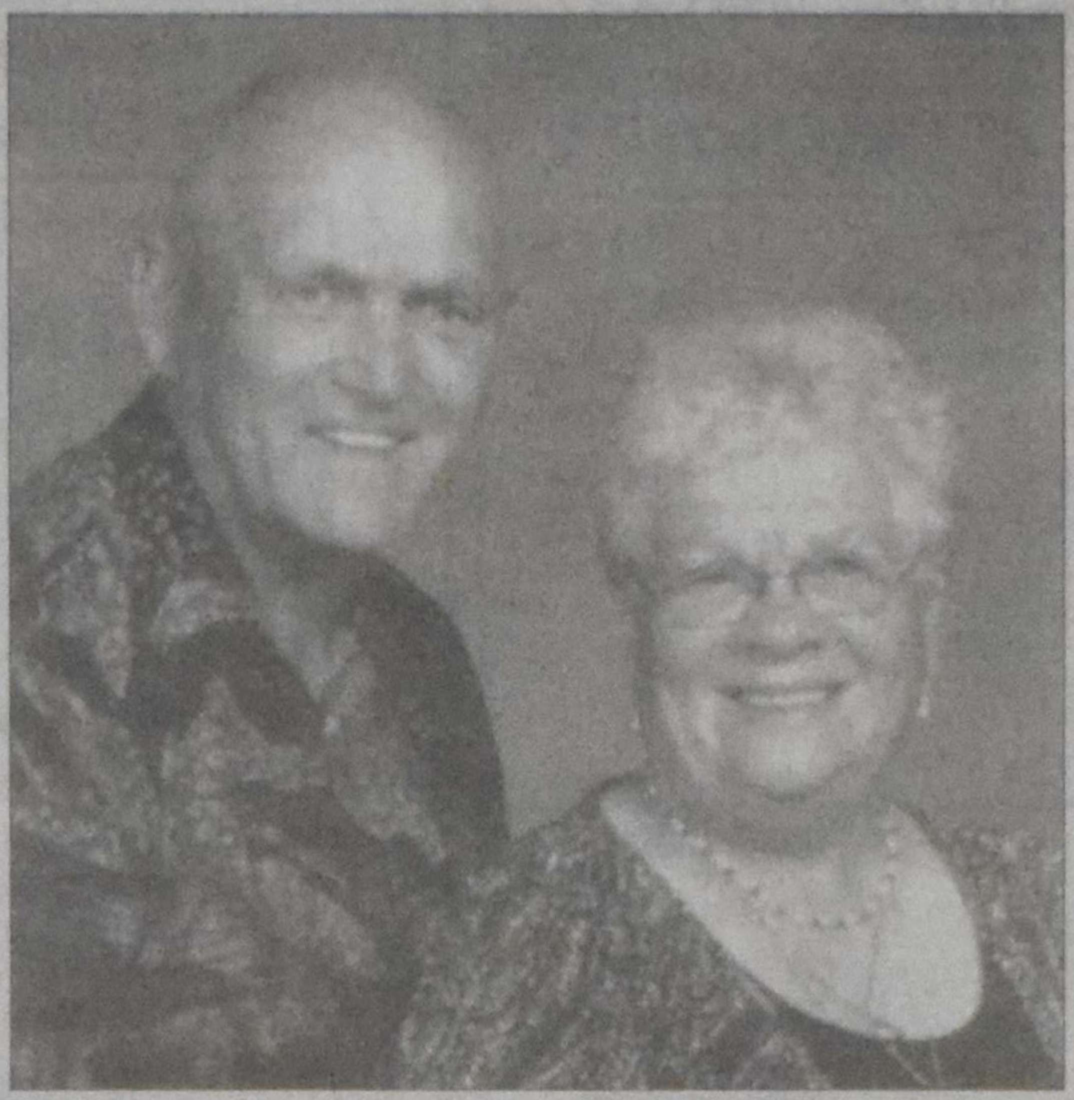

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Obituaries

On February 2, 2009, the LORD took home our brother-in-law

JACK VOOGD

at the age of 80 years.
Dear husband of Geesina Voogd - De Vries.

Jan & Stien De Vries, *The Netherlands*
Jantje & (Dienco†) VanNiejenhuis, *The Neth.*
Frances & (Dirk†) De Boer, *Sarnia ON*
Gerrit & Lena De Vries, *The Netherlands*
Hillie & Gordon Ellens, *Sarnia ON*
Riek & Fietze Van Zwol, *The Neth.*
Wieny De Vries, *The Netherlands*

Funeral service was held on Feb. 6 in the Maranatha Chr. Ref. Church in Woodstock.

Correspondence: Mrs. G Voogd, 565 Springbank Ave, Woodstock ON N4T 1H5

April 21, 1932 – February 2, 2009

At Hamilton General Hospital, suddenly but peacefully, in the LORD's time, he called home our beloved wife, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother,

AALTJE KELLY (Zantingh) in her 77th year.

Faithful and devoted wife of Harm Kelly for 56 years.

Loving mother, grandmother and great-grandmother to:
*Ina & Harry Bethlehem – Sheri & Arjan Vos, Harold & Jennifer, Brianna, Collin, Jayden, Kaleigh, Josiah. Rachel & Mark den Bak, Cole, Curtis. Ed & Melanie, Daniel, Aliyah. Emily & Peter VanderVelde
*Clara & Gary Wielink – Michael & Nataschia, Corey, Shaniah, Darian, Chloe.
*Alice & Jerry Evers
*Henry Wielink – Keith & Suzanne, Alanna, Taylor, Lukas, Tristan. Alicia & Murray Ravensburgen, Michael, Nathan. Faye & Ken Struyk, Kayla, Leigha, Noah. Henk & Heather. Sarah & Ryan Smit, Brynlea, Logan
*Ed & Alice Kelly – Harm & Annette, Joshua Michael†, Hannah, Caleb. Edward & Maria, Hailey, Tyler. Alida & Ian Bos, Alliyah, Cierra. Rosalie, Melissa & Rafael, Matthew, Andrew
*Henry and Roeli Kelly – Harold & Rhonda, Olivia, Paige, Parker. Jacob, Rebecca, Henry & Dianna, John, Aileen, Rosalynn, Ruth, Esther
*Harold & Riemke Kelly – Harold & Chantel, Shayna, Deryl, Emily. David, Hendrik, Anneke, Laura, Michelle
*John & Sietske Kelly – Harm & Petrina. Tsjibbe & Amanda, Edward, Amy, Hendrik, Michael
*Janet & Glenn Oosterhof – Alissa, Miranda, Glenn, David†.

She will be missed by her brothers and sisters and extended family:
Joe & Elly Zantingh, John & Alida Zantingh, Aleda & Bert† Melle Rozema, Rick & Willy Zantingh, Sienie & Albert Katerburg, Bert & Fenna Zantingh, Jane & Martin VanderVeen, Henry & Brenda Zantingh, Jerry & Helen Zantingh and Ed & Rhea DeVries.
Jan† & Ali Kelly, Hendrik† & Anna† Kelly, Lambertus† & Hennie Kelly, Margaret & John† Koster, Femmie & Albert Linde, Lammie & Simon Benjamins, Hennie & Peter Vanderdeen, Dinie Hoogedoorn, Jan Kelly†, Jan Kelly†, Greta Kelly†

Her love and dedication will be sadly missed and remembered by all.
Psalm 23:1 "The Lord is my Shepherd" and
Phillipians 1:21 "For me to live is Christ and to die is gain"

Correspondence address: 216 Logan Rd, Dunnville ON NIA 2W7

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c/o Christian Courier
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A DUTCH SERVICE
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Welkom

See Calendar of Events p.23 for up-coming functions or visit our website at christiancourier.ca

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Saturday March 7, 2009
at the **Waterloo CRC**
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Workshops include: Justice and Abuse in the CRC, A Restorative Justice Option for Dealing with Sexual Trauma, Responding to People with a Developmental Disability, When "Legion" Shows Up in Church, and Surviving Abuse.

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Brochures with more information are available from the church secretary. Other information and registration forms can be found at **www.scc.wmott.ca** or phone Atie Ott at **519-576-0965.**

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A church profile is available. Please contact search committee chair Toby Smits at *smitseng@eagle.ca* or call (905) 349-3454 evenings or weekends.

Classifieds

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Christian Courier is published on the second and fourth Monday of each month. Copy deadline for each issue is 9 a.m. Wednesday, 12 days prior to publication date.
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Qualified persons should send their resumes, along with their philosophy of education and statement of faith before February 28, 2009. Houston is forestry-based community of about 4000 people. Our students come from mainly four local churches: Baptist, Canadian Reformed, Christian Reformed and Pentecostal.

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John Siebenga, Principal
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250-845-3343 (home)
FAX: 250-845-7738
E-mail:
hcschool@houstonchristianschool.ca

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WOODLAND CHRISTIAN HIGH SCHOOL

Teachers who are qualified to teach in the following areas are encouraged to apply:
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at principal@woodland.on.ca.
Information about Woodland Christian High School is available on our website at www.woodland.on.ca

Advertised job opportunities can be found on our website at www.christiancourier.ca

PACIFIC CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
www.pacificchristian.ca

Pacific Christian School in beautiful Victoria, BC is seeking a full time Band/Choir Director. As a well established, interdenominational school of 1000 students operating three campuses, we are seeking an individual who is team-oriented and passionate about promoting the vision and mission of PCS.

Qualifications:

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The current Band/Choir Director teaches and leads all bands and choirs from Grades 6-12, comprising a full-time position. For the appropriate candidate(s), we may consider splitting this position between band and choir or between secondary and middle school, and possibly combine with other teaching assignments in the school system. Please send your cover letter, resume and statement of faith by March 30, 2009 to:

David O'Dell – Principal — Pacific Christian School — Secondary Campus 654 Agnes Street, Victoria, BC V8Z 2E6
Email: dodell@pacificchristian.ca

Wholesale nursery looking for

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Applicant must have computer and some accounting skills, especially a working knowledge of Excel, Access and Word. Responsibilities would include shipping co-ordination and inventory control. Knowledge of nursery plants would be an asset. Applicant must be able to work as part of a team and possess good organizational skills. Must be willing to work longer hours during spring shipping season.
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Resumes can be dropped off Monday to Friday, between the hours of 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. at
Willowbrook Nurseries Inc.
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As a result of God's continued blessings, and to further meet our vision and mission, Worldwide Christian Schools invites applications for:

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  - Coordinate and further develop both the Walking Together (indigenous teacher training) and School Sponsorship programs.
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Worldwide Christian Schools (WWCS) is a Christian organization providing hope to children in developing countries through Christ-centred education.

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Worldwide Christian Schools
Attn: Hank de Jong
70 Lancing Drive, Hamilton, ON L8W 3A1
866-360-4274 canada@wwcs.org

Application deadline is March 6, 2009.
Full job description available upon request.

CALL FOR VISUAL ARTISTS

BORDERS across
ART EXHIBITION | JUNE 3-5 '09

ACROSS BORDERS
an international conference featuring Dutch-Canadian and Dutch-American history and culture, to be held on June 3-5, 2009 at Redeemer University College, invites submissions for an art exhibition.
Media: All
Location: Ancaster, Ontario
Deadline: April 15, 2009
Open to artists of Dutch heritage

For more details please contact
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pzantingh@redeemer.ca
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Classifieds

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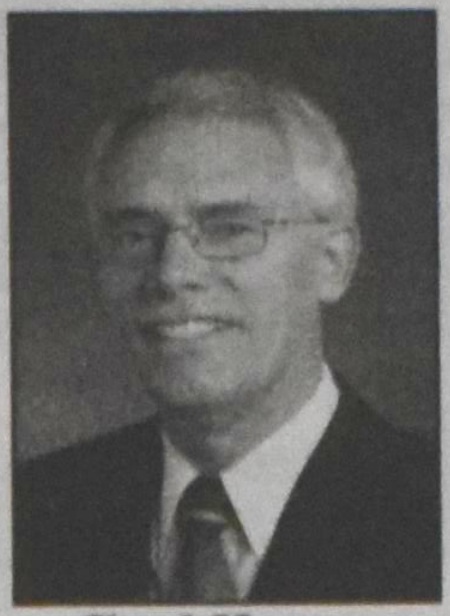

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Puzzle from ***www.sudoku-puzzles.net*** **Medium**

	1		7			3	2	
2				8		4		7
5				4				
	6	2			4		3	
				9				
	8		1			5	6	
				5				9
9		8		2				3
	4	7			8		5	

Elim Investment Opportunities

Promissory Notes

Bonds – Sold Out

This is not to be construed as an offer to solicit investments and no investment can be made until the investor has received an Information Statement issued by Elim Housing Society.

Established by the Elim Housing Society in 1995, Elim Village is located on 20 acres in the heart of Surrey's Fleetwood area. Based and operated on Christian principles, Elim's vision is to provide various levels of quality care for seniors.

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A Christian Retirement Community

Events/Advertising

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mar 6, 7 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents"Eerlijk of Heerlijk" Market Centre Theatre, 22 Reeve Street, **Woodstock**, Ontario. Admission: $15 – Advance tickets only. See ad this issue for details.

Mar 8 Dutch Service will be held in the **Ancaster** Christian Reformed Church at 3:00 p.m. Rev. Ralph Koops will be preaching.

Mar 7 The Annual Inter-Classis Safe Church Abuse Prevention Training Event will take place on Saturday from 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m. at the Waterloo CRC. /www.scc.wmott.ca

Mar 27 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Eerlijk of Heerlijk" at Great Lakes Christian College in **Beamsville** on Friday at 8 p.m. See ad this issue for ticket information and details.

Apr 3 The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents "Eerlijk of Heerlijk" at the London Dutch Canadian Hall in **London** at 8 p.m. See ad this issue for details.

Apr 24-25 Marriage Encounter weekend, **London**, ON. For more information or to register on-line, go to www.reformedme.org or contact Chris & Cindy Otten at 519-393-5163 or by email at Ontario_registration@reformedme.org

May 23 Combined nine Male Choirs (over 300 voices) from Southwestern Ontario, will present D. V. a Festival of Praise Concert, singing all Sacred mass numbers, at the Centennial Hall, 555 Wellington Street, London, Ontario. Saturday, at time 7:30 p.m. Doors open 6:30 p.m. Tickets $13.00 from all choir members and host Choir: St. Thomas District Male Choir "Crescendo". For tickets and information please call: (519) 637-4357 or (519) 631-9245 No reserved seating.

May 30,31 First CRC **Sarnia**, Ontario will be celebrating the 75th anniversary of its organization the weekend of May 30, 31. A banquet will be held on Saturday night with special services held on Sunday. All friends and former members are certainly invited and welcome to join in this celebration. For more information or to order banquet tickets please e-mail us at 1crc75@gmail.com or call the church office at 519-336-8808.

The Woodstock Dutch Theatre Group presents

"Eerlijk of Heerlijk"

Een plattelandskomedie in drie bedrijven door Hans Gnant A. Smit

Friday March 6th 2009 at 8.00 PM
Saturday March 7th 2009 at 2.30 PM
Saturday March 7th 2009 at 8.00 PM

Market Centre Theatre
22 Reeve Street, **Woodstock**, Ontario

Admission: $15 – Advance tickets only
Net proceeds to Children's Hospital of Western Ontario

Tickets available at

Maya Health Food Centre & Dutch Shop
55 Ingersoll Road, Woodstock

Mike's Meat Market
1866 Dundas Street, London

Or send cheque and stamped self-addressed envelope to

Adrian Rodenburg
RR 4, Thamesford ON
N0M 2M0
519 283 6285

Ankie Van Haastert
RR 4, Woodstock ON
N4S 7V8
519 424 2985

Also playing at
Great Lakes Christian College in **Beamsville** on Friday March 27th at 8.00 PM
London Dutch Canadian Hall in **London** on Friday April 3rd at 8.00 PM

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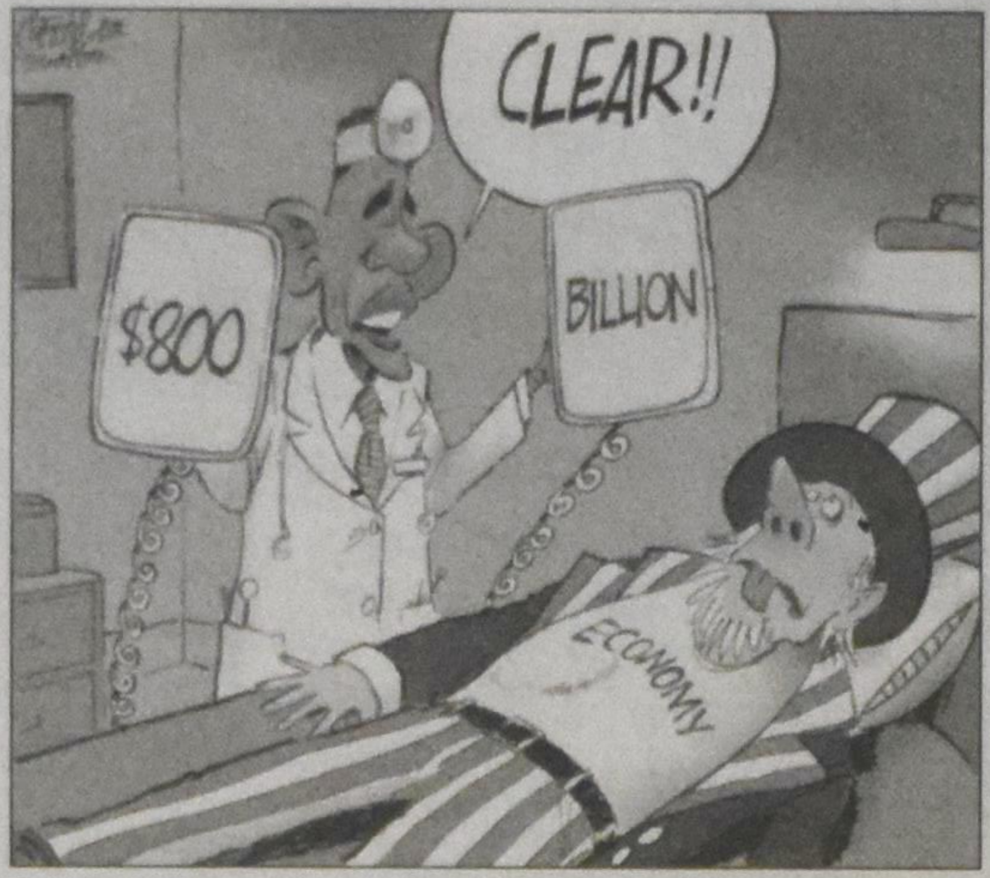
News

How to draw Obama

Daryl Cagle

Cam Cardow of the Ottawa Citizen

Tab of the Calgary Sun



Patrick Corrigan of the Toronto Star

Obama seems like an easy guy to draw; he's skinny, has a big chin, expressive eyebrows and lips. As it turns out, no matter how a cartoonist draws Obama, somebody gets mad.

When Obama burst into the presidential campaign, cartoonists started drawing him as a caricature without much exaggeration. As time goes by, political figures morph in cartoons into caricatures of caricatures; George W. Bush shrank to knee height and grew huge bunny ears; Bill Clinton lost his pants and grew fatter (even as he got skinnier in real life). At the beginning of the Obama administration, everyone is watching to see how the cartoon Obama evolves.

I worked for twenty years as a cartoon illustrator, doing drawings for books, magazines and advertising. I was often given clear guidelines on how I was supposed to draw African-Americans: with "small noses" and "thin lips." I was instructed to make any crowds of cartoon characters racially diverse, but only diverse in color, not in facial features. Thick lips and wide noses on African American faces would be returned to me for correction, with a polite reminder of the corporate policies on depictions of minority facial features.

Cartoonist Gary McCoy has been lambasted by readers, and by Salon.com, for drawing racially insensitive, big lips on Obama. Some cartoonists have drawn attention for giving Obama blue lips. Canadian cartoonist Patrick Corrigan of the Toronto Star had an Obama cartoon killed by his editor because of "racist" blue lips. Thomas "Tab" Boldt of the Calgary Sun and Cam Cardow of the Ottawa Citizen have also been rendering Obama with blue lips. Corrigan tells me that everyone in Canada, in the winter, has blue lips.

Readers of my blog explained to me that blue lips are racist and pointed out an old racist expression "blue gums," which was a new one for me. Corrigan tells me he'll be switching to purple lips, Cam will be giving up on the blue lips and Tab was laid off. That may mean the end of blue lips for Obama.

Syndicated caricaturist Taylor Jones also sees blue in Obama. He writes: "One of the most interesting things about Obama's eyes is the slight blue tinge to the flesh below his eyebrows. It's also visible on his eyelids. It's as though he's wearing a bit of eye shadow. Don't know if it's actual blue pigmentation, or just the effect of light bouncing off the skin stretched against his eye sockets. But it adds a nifty touch whenever I'm drawing Obama's caricature in color."

I'm considering going all the way, making Obama completely blue (if that's not racist).

Obama's ears have grown huge for most cartoonists. George W. Bush's ears also grew huge, but it took more than a year for Bush's big ears to catch on – Obama's ears started right away, and have been expanding faster than the national debt. It may be that after eight years of Bush, we now see huge ears as a standard, presidential attribute. I don't see any particular reason for either Bush's or Obama's ears to grow in cartoons, but with cartoonist peer pressure it will soon be impossible to draw a likeness of Obama without colossal ears.

There seems to be an expectation that political cartoonists are mostly liberals who love Obama and will find it hard to make fun of him in cartoons. Some cartoonists have complained in the press that Obama is dull, and that there is little to criticize about him – we have a term of art for cartoonists like that, we call them "bad cartoonists." It is the job of an editorial cartoonist to dislike everybody. Political cartoonists have nothing to gain by being in favor of anything. Cartoons that support anything are lousy cartoons. There is plenty for everyone not to like about Obama – and with the porky stimulus package and tax-evading cabinet appointments, there's more every day!

The cartoon version of Obama will continue to evolve quickly. If we ever actually see him smoking a cigarette, he will always be smoking in cartoons. Obama may turn different colors, and he'll grow or shrink with his performance. Obama's ears will keep growing no matter what he does. As Obama's honeymoon passes and the caricatures become more severe, I expect the complaints about racism in the cartoons will also grow more severe.

But I don't care. I'm making Obama blue today.

Daryl Cagle is a political cartoonist and blogger for MSNBC.com; he is a past president of the National Cartoonists Society (which includes a Canadian chapter) and his cartoons are syndicated to more than 850 newspapers.

Jim Rauwerda built this snow fort with his children (from left) Joey, Annie and Sammy, in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The final structure reminded its architect of the Tower of Babel, and prompted this thought: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures of ice. They melt." Watch a 2-minute video on YouTube showing its construction by searching for IceHouse 2009, or using this address: youtube.com/watch?v=Cw3DFHme4NY

Odds and Trends

Not the Queen's English

In 2003, in a funny little grammar book that topped best-seller lists, Lynne Truss noted that "Cruelty to punctuation is quite unlegislated . . . how much more abuse must the apostrophe endure?" Her question seems quite prescient, in light of recent events in England.

The city council of Birmingham has declared that it will no longer place apostrophes on street signs. King's Heath, for example, will be shortened to Kings Heath, and this decision has grammar lovers in a frenzy. As the *Globe* puts it, "Now, even the Birmingham Children's Hospital is the Birmingham Childrens Hospital, dashing the ambitions of that city's schoolteachers to ever hope to teach children how to write."

Members of the British press have split down the middle over the issue, prompting some to identify the dispute as essentially class-based. Pro-apostrophe users see Birmingham as degrading the English language, while the anti-apostrophe crowd calls the grammarians uptight and old-fashioned.

I'm afraid it may be one more milestone, as Lynne Truss would say, on the road to punctuation anarchy. Although, as far as I can tell, writers on both sides of the language divide have not gone so far as to eliminate the long-suffering little punctuation mark from their own work.

How do you solve a problem. . . .

Fifteen years ago, the other nuns rolled their eyes when Sister Helena Marie said she wanted to make their home, the Community of the Holy Spirit Convent in New York, more environmentally friendly. Slowly, however, her ideas took root. "We began talking more deeply amongst ourselves about how spirituality and ecology are linked," said Sister Faith Margaret.

First, the convent sold its minivan and joined a car-sharing company called Zipcar. The nuns began serving fair trade coffee and holding spiritual retreats that blend prayer, silence, and eco-discussions. A few sisters became vegans, and others are researching where to purchase fair labour, organic cotton habits.

Most significantly, the nuns plan to build a new "green" convent in West Harlem with energy efficient heating and cooling systems, rooftop gardens, and rainwater collection.

When a *New York Times* reporter asked the convent's oldest nun, 87-year-old Sister Elise, if she was nostalgic about the upcoming move, she said no. "I'll be happy to live anywhere. I already have a reservation in another place."

Snapshot

Do you love taking photographs? Is there a picture on your camera worth sharing with others? *Christian Courier* invites you to submit it to angela@christiancourier.ca for consideration in this space. We hope to publish unusual, timely and interesting *original* photographs. Please include a caption (no more than 50 words) that explains your photo.

Angela Reitsma Bick